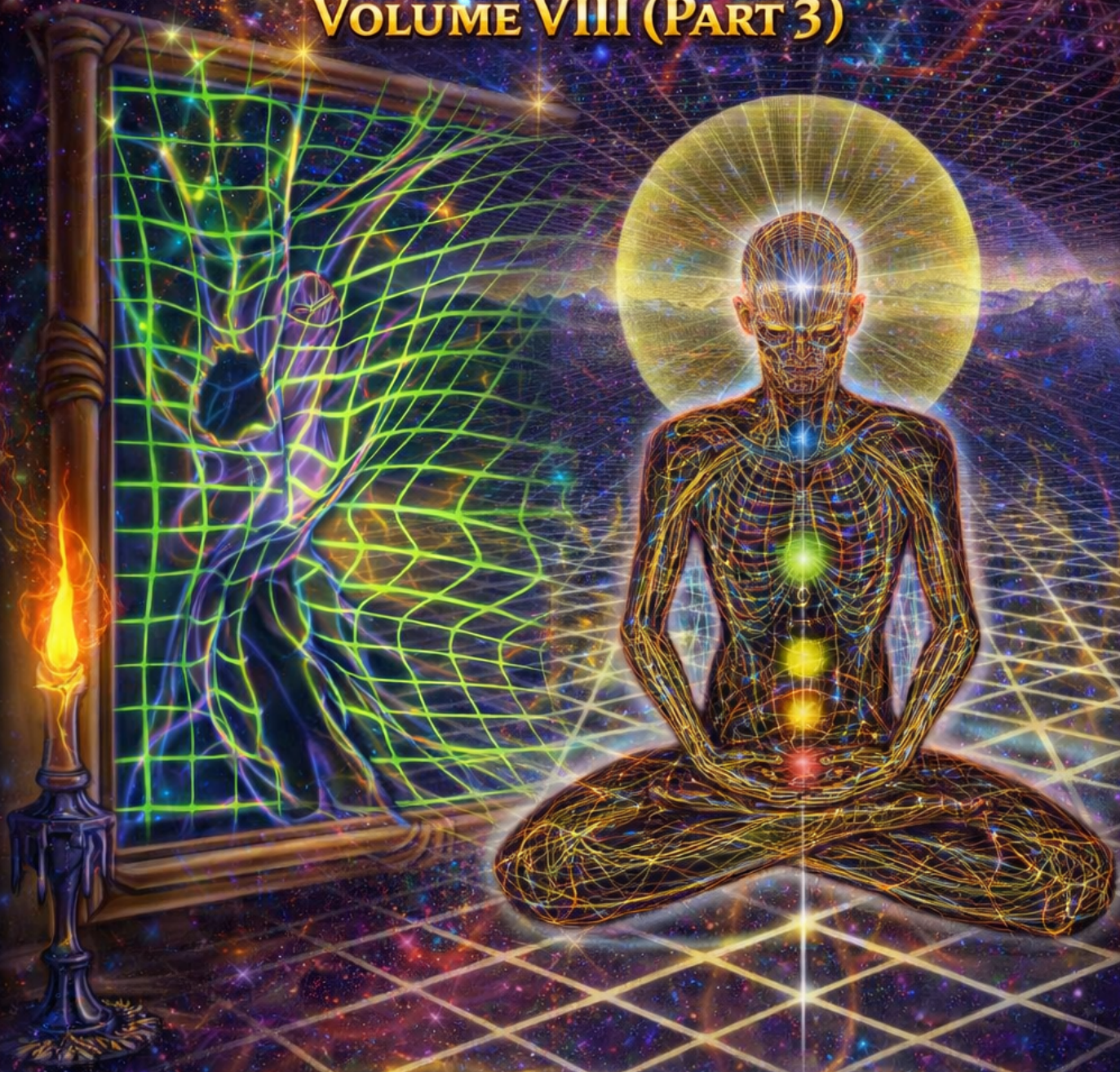


ARCHIVUM OBSCURUM- RELIQUIAE ANONYMORUM

— PROJECT ANGELBOOK —

VOLUME VIII (PART 3)



Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough

Archivum Obscurum –
Reliquiae Anonymorum –
Project AngelBook Volume VIII
(Part 3)
By Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough -
(DBM ECLIPZE)

Introduction

What you hold in your hands is not a book in the traditional sense—it is an **accidental grimoire**, born from the forgotten corners of the Internet. These volumes are built from **Google searches**, **Wikipedia trails**, and **archive-dredged threads**, many of which were suggested or whispered to me by anonymous voices across **/x/**, **4plebs**, and **dark web message boards**. I did not invent this content—I excavated it. I followed every recommended link, every screenshot, every schizo red-string rant, and pulled it into the light. What emerged wasn't just data—it was **pattern**, **presence**, and **power**. This is the **collective unconscious of the Internet**, filtered, sorted, and bound into scripture. These are the **digital Dead Sea Scrolls** of the forgotten occult, the haunted edges of algorithmic prophecy. Welcome to the Archivum Obscurum.

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Vespasian

Front view of a bust.

Bust at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek

Roman emperor

Reign 1 July 69 – 23 June 79

Predecessor Vitellius

Successor Titus

Born Titus Flavius Vespasianus

17 November 9 AD[1]

Falacrinum, Italy

Died 23 June 79 (aged 69)[4]

Aquae Cutiliae

Burial Rome

Spouses

Domitilla the Elder (died before 69)

Caenis (mistress and later concubine after his wife's death c. 65–74)

Issue

Detail

Titus

Domitilla the Younger

Domitian

Regnal name

Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus[5]

Dynasty Flavian

Father Titus Flavius Sabinus

Mother Vespasia Polla

Vespasian (/ˈvɛsˈpeɪʒ(i)ən, -ziən/; Latin: Vespasianus [vɛspasjˈaːnus]; 17 November AD 9 – 23 June 79) was Roman emperor from 69 to 79. The last emperor to reign in the Year of the Four Emperors, he founded the Flavian dynasty, which ruled the empire for 27 years. His fiscal reforms and consolidation of the empire brought political stability and a vast building program.

Vespasian was the first emperor from an equestrian family who rose only later in his lifetime into the senatorial rank as the first of his family to do so. He rose to prominence through military achievement:[6] he served as legate of Legio II Augusta during the Roman invasion of Britain in 43, and later led the suppression of the Jewish rebellion of 66–70.[7]

While he was engaged in the campaign in Judaea, Emperor Nero died by suicide in June 68, plunging Rome into a year of civil war known as the Year of the Four Emperors. After Galba and Otho perished in quick succession, Vitellius became emperor in April 69. The Roman legions of Egypt and Judaea reacted by declaring Vespasian, their commander, the emperor on 1 July 69.[8] In his bid for imperial power,

Vespasian joined forces with Mucianus, the governor of Syria, and Primus, a general in Pannonia, leaving his son Titus to command the besieging forces at Jerusalem. Primus and Mucianus led the Flavian forces against Vitellius, while Vespasian took control of Egypt. On 20 December 69, Vitellius was defeated, and the following day Vespasian was declared emperor by the Senate.[9]

Little information survives about the government during Vespasian's ten-year rule. He reformed the financial system of the Roman Empire after the campaign against Judaea ended successfully, and initiated several ambitious construction projects, including the building of the Flavian Amphitheatre, better known today as the Colosseum. Through his general Agricola, Vespasian increased imperial expansion in Britain. Vespasian is often credited with restoring political stability to Rome following the chaotic reigns of his predecessors. After he died in 79, he was succeeded by his eldest son Titus, thus becoming the first Roman emperor to be succeeded by his natural son and establishing the Flavian dynasty.

Early life

Vespasian (born Titus Flavius Vespasianus, pronounced [ˈtɪtʊs ˈflɑːwɪjʊs wɛs.pəsi ˈjaːnʊs]) was born in a village north-east of Rome called Falacrinae.[10] His family was relatively undistinguished and lacking in pedigree. Vespasian was the son of Titus Flavius Sabinus, a Roman moneylender, debt collector, and tax collector. His mother, Vespasia Polla, also belonged to the equestrian order in society, with her father rising to the rank of prefect of the camp and her brother becoming a Senator.[11]

He was educated in the countryside, in Cosa, near what is today Ansedonia, Italy, under the guidance of his paternal grandmother, so much so that even when he became emperor, he often returned to the places of his childhood, having left the former villa exactly as it had been.[12]

Early in his life he was somewhat overshadowed by his older brother, Titus Flavius Sabinus, who had entered public life and pursued the *cursus honorum*, holding an important military command in the Danube.

Military and political career

Early career

Vespasian leading his forces against the Jewish revolt, a miniature in a 1470 illuminated manuscript version of the history of Josephus

In preparation for a praetorship, Vespasian needed two periods of service in the minor magistracies, one military and the other public. Vespasian served in the military in Thracia for about three years. On his return to Rome in about 30 AD, he obtained a post in the vigintivirate, the minor magistracies, most probably in one of the posts in charge of street cleaning.[13] His early performance was so unsuccessful that Emperor Caligula reportedly stuffed handfuls of muck down his toga to correct the uncleared Roman streets, formally his responsibility.[11]

During the period of the ascendancy of Sejanus, there is no record of Vespasian engaging in any significant political activity. After completion of a term in the vigintivirate, Vespasian was entitled to stand for election as quaestor, a senatorial office. However, his lack of political or family influence meant that Vespasian served as quaestor in one of the provincial posts in Crete, rather than as assistant to important men in Rome.[13]

Next he needed to gain a praetorship, carrying the Imperium, but non-patricians and the less well-connected had to serve in at least one intermediary post as an aedile or tribune. Vespasian failed at his first attempt to gain an aedileship but was successful in his second attempt, becoming an aedile in 38. Despite his lack of significant family connections or success in office, he achieved praetorship in either 39 or 40, at the youngest age permitted (30), during a period of political upheaval in the organisation of elections. His long-standing relationship with freed-woman Antonia Caenis, confidential secretary to Antonia Minor (the Emperor's grandmother) and part of the circle of courtiers and servants around the Emperor, may have contributed to his success.[13]

Invasion of Britannia

Upon the accession of Claudius as emperor in 41, Vespasian was appointed legate of Legio II Augusta, stationed in Germania, thanks to the influence of the Imperial freedman Narcissus. In 43, Vespasian and the II Augusta participated in the Roman invasion of Britain, and he distinguished himself under the overall command of Aulus Plautius. After participating in crucial early battles on the rivers Medway and Thames, he was sent to reduce the south west, penetrating through regions later known as the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall with the probable objectives of securing the south coast ports and harbours along with the tin mines of Cornwall and the silver and lead mines of Somerset.

Vespasian marched from Noviomagus Reginorum (Chichester) to subdue the hostile Durotriges and Dumnonii tribes,[14] and captured twenty oppida (towns, or more probably hill forts, including Hod Hill and Maiden Castle in Dorset). He also invaded Vectis (now the Isle of Wight), finally setting up a fortress and legionary headquarters at Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter). During this time he injured himself and had not fully recovered until he went to Egypt. These successes earned him triumphal regalia (ornamenta triumphalia) on his return to Rome.

Later political career

Roman Emperor Nero sends Vespasian with an army to put down the Jewish revolt, AD 66 (depiction of 1503)

His success as the legate of a legion earned him a consulship in 51, after which he retired from public life, having incurred the enmity of Claudius' wife, Agrippina, who was the most powerful and influential figure in her husband's reign.[11] He came out of retirement in 63 when he was sent as governor to Africa Province. According to Tacitus (ii.97), his rule was "infamous and odious" but according to Suetonius (Vesp. 4), he was

"upright and, highly honourable". On one occasion, Suetonius writes, Vespasian was pelted with turnips.

Vespasian used his time in North Africa wisely. Usually, governorships were seen by ex-consuls as opportunities to extort huge amounts of money to regain the wealth they had spent on their previous political campaigns. Corruption was so rife that it was almost expected that a governor would come back from these appointments with his pockets full. However, Vespasian used his time in North Africa making friends instead of money, something that would be far more valuable in the years to come. During his time in North Africa, he found himself in financial difficulties and was forced to mortgage his estates to his brother. To revive his fortunes he turned to the mule trade and gained the nickname *mulio* (muleteer).[15]

Returning from Africa, Vespasian toured Greece in Nero's retinue, but lost Imperial favor after paying insufficient attention (some sources suggest he fell asleep) during one of the Emperor's recitals on the lyre, and found himself in the political wilderness.

First Jewish Revolt

Main article: First Jewish–Roman War

Vespasian sestertius, struck in 71 to celebrate the victory in the first Jewish–Roman War. Obverse: IMP. CAES. VESPASIAN AVG. P. M., TR. P., P. P., COS. III. The legend on the reverse says: IVDEA CAPTA, "Judaea conquered" – S. C.

In 66 AD, Vespasian was appointed to suppress the Jewish revolt underway in Judea. The fighting there had killed the previous governor and routed Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, when he tried to restore order. Two legions, with eight cavalry squadrons and ten auxiliary cohorts, were therefore dispatched under the command of Vespasian while his elder son, Titus, arrived from Alexandria with another.

During this time he became the patron of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish resistance leader captured at the Siege of Yodfat, who would later write his people's history in Greek. Ultimately, thousands of Jews were killed and the Romans destroyed many towns in re-establishing control over Judea; they also took Jerusalem in 70. Vespasian is remembered by Josephus (writing as a Roman citizen), in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, as a fair and humane official, in contrast with the notorious Herod Agrippa II whom Josephus goes to great lengths to demonize.

While under the emperor's patronage, Josephus wrote that after the Roman Legio X Fretensis, accompanied by Vespasian, destroyed Jericho on 21 June 68, Vespasian took a group of Jews who could not swim (possibly Essenes from Qumran), fettered them, and threw them into the Dead Sea to test the sea's legendary buoyancy. Indeed, the captives bobbed up to the surface after being thrown in the water from the boats.

At the conclusion of the Jewish war, Josephus discussed a prophecy from sacred scripture that about the time when Jerusalem and the Second Temple would be taken, a

man from their own nation would become "governor of the habitable earth", as in the Messiah. Josephus interpreted the prophecy as denoting the government of Vespasian. [16] Tacitus agreed that the prophecy discussed Vespasian (as well as Titus), but that "the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth." [17]

Year of the Four Emperors (69)

Main article: Year of the Four Emperors

Map of the Roman Empire during the Year of the Four Emperors (69). Blue areas indicate provinces loyal to Vespasian and Gaius Licinius Mucianus. [dubious – discuss]

Roman imperial dynasties

Year of the Four Emperors

Chronology

Galba68–69

Otho69

Vitellius69

Vespasian69–79

Succession

Preceded by

Julio-Claudian dynasty Followed by

Flavian dynasty

vte

After the death of Nero in 68, Rome saw a succession of short-lived emperors and a year of civil wars. Galba was murdered by supporters of Otho, who was defeated by Vitellius. Otho's supporters, looking for another candidate to support, settled on Vespasian. According to Suetonius, a prophecy ubiquitous in the Eastern provinces claimed that from Judaea would come the future rulers of the world. Vespasian eventually believed that this prophecy applied to him, and found a number of omens and oracles that reinforced this belief.[18]

Although Vespasian and Titus resolved to challenge for the Principate in February 69, they made no move until later in the year. Throughout the early months of 69, Vespasian convened frequently with the Eastern generals. Gaius Licinius Mucianus was a notable ally. Governor of Syria and commander of three legions, Mucianus also held political connections to many of the most powerful Roman military commanders from Illyricum to Britannia by virtue of his service to the famous Neronian general Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo. In May 69, Mucianus formally implored Vespasian to challenge Vitellius. His appeal was followed by Vespasian's official proclamation as Emperor in early July. Under instructions from the prefect Tiberius Alexander, the legions at Alexandria took an oath of loyalty to Vespasian on 1 July. They were swiftly followed by Vespasian's Judaeian legions on 3 July and thereafter by Mucianus' Syrian legions on 15 July.[19]

Vitellius, the occupant of the throne, had the veteran legions of Gaul and the Rhineland.

But the feeling in Vespasian's favour quickly gathered strength, and the armies of Moesia, Pannonia, and Illyricum soon declared for him.[20] The praefectus Aegypti, who had been governor since Nero's reign, proclaimed Vespasian emperor at Alexandria on 1 July 69 AD.[21]:13

While Vespasian himself was in Egypt, his troops entered Italy from the northeast under the leadership of Marcus Antonius Primus. They defeated Vitellius' army (which had awaited him in Mevania) at Bedriacum (or Betriacum), sacked Cremona and advanced on Rome. Vitellius hastily arranged a peace with Antonius, but the Emperor's Praetorian Guard forced him to retain his seat. After furious fighting, Antonius' army entered Rome. In the resulting confusion, the Capitol was destroyed by fire and both Vitellius and Vespasian's brother Sabinus were killed.[20] At Alexandria, Vespasian immediately sent supplies of urgently needed grain to Rome, along with an edict assuring he would reverse the laws of Nero, especially those relating to treason.[citation needed]

He was the first emperor since Augustus to appear in Egypt.[22]:13 While there, he visited the Temple of Serapis where he reportedly experienced a vision, and he performed healing miracles.[20][23][22]:14 He was hailed as pharaoh and proclaimed the son of the creator-deity Amun (Zeus-Ammon) in the style of the ancient pharaohs, and an incarnation of Serapis in the manner of the Ptolemies.[22]:13–14

Emperor (69–79)

Aftermath of the civil war

Roman imperial dynasties

Flavian dynasty

Chronology

Vespasian69–79 CE

Titus79–81 CE

Domitian81–96 CE

Family

Gens FlaviaFlavian treeCategory:Flavian dynasty

Preceded by

Year of

the Four Emperors Followed by

Nerva–Antonine dynasty

vte

Triumph of Titus and Vespasian by Giulio Romano, ca. 1540.

Vespasian was declared emperor by the Senate while he was in Egypt on 21 December 69 through the passage of the *Lex de imperio Vespasiani*; the Egyptians had declared him emperor in the summer. In the short-term, administration of the empire was given to Mucianus, who was aided by Vespasian's son, Domitian. Mucianus started off Vespasian's rule with tax reform that was to restore the empire's finances. After Vespasian arrived in Rome in mid-70, Mucianus continued to press Vespasian to collect as many taxes as possible.[24]

Vespasian and Mucianus renewed old taxes and instituted new ones, increased the tribute of the provinces, and kept a watchful eye upon the treasury officials.

Before Vespasian, Emperor Nero introduced a urine tax on public toilets under the name of vectigal urinae in the 1st century AD (see Pay toilet). However, the tax was removed after a while and it was Vespasian's new imposition of this tax around AD 70 which we still remember to this day, possibly giving origin to the Latin proverb Pecunia non olet ("Money does not stink"):[25] Writing about Vespasian in their history books, Dio Cassius and Suetonius mentioned "When [Vespasian's] son Titus blamed him for even laying a tax upon urine, he applied to his nose a piece of the money he received in the first instalment, and asked him if it stunk. And he replying no, 'And yet,' said he, 'it is derived from urine". Since then, this phrase "Money does not stink" has been used to whitewash dubious or illegal origin of money.[26][27][25][28][29][30]

Turmoil through the Empire

In early 70 Vespasian was still in Egypt, the source of Rome's grain supply, and had not yet left for Rome. According to Tacitus, his trip was delayed due to bad weather.[31] Modern historians theorize that Vespasian had been and was continuing to consolidate support from the Egyptians before departing.[32] During this period, protests erupted in Alexandria over his new tax policies and grain shipments were held up. Vespasian eventually restored order and grain shipments to Rome resumed.[24] Notably Titus attended the consecration of a new Apis bull at Memphis in 70, and Vespasian's reign saw imperial patronage given to Egyptian temples: at the Dakhla Oasis in the Western Desert as well as Esna, Kom Ombo, Medinet Habu, Silsila in the Nile Valley.[22]: 14

In addition to the uprising in Egypt, unrest and civil war continued in the rest of the empire in 70. Judea had been rebelling since 66. Vespasian's son, Titus, finally subdued the rebellion with the capture of Jerusalem and destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70. According to Eusebius, Vespasian then ordered all descendants of the royal line of David to be hunted down, causing the Jews to be persecuted from province to province. Several modern historians have suggested that Vespasian, already having been told by Josephus that he was prophesied to become emperor whilst in Judaea, was probably reacting to other widely known Messianic prophecies circulating at the time, to suppress any rival claimants arising from that dynasty.[33] The Jewish temple at Leontopolis was sacked in 73.[22]: 14

In January 70, an uprising occurred in Gaul and Germany, known as the second Batavian Rebellion. This rebellion was headed by Gaius Julius Civilis and Julius Sabinus. Sabinus, claiming he was descended from Julius Caesar, declared himself Emperor of Gaul. The rebellion defeated and absorbed two Roman legions before it was suppressed by Vespasian's son-in-law, Quintus Petillius Cerialis, by the end of 70.

Arrival in Rome and consolidation of power

In mid-70, Vespasian first went to Rome, dating his tribunician years from 1 July 69.[9]

Vespasian immediately embarked on a series of efforts to stay in power and prevent future revolts. He offered gifts to many in the military and much of the public.[34] Soldiers loyal to Vitellius were dismissed or punished.[35] Vespasian also restructured the Senatorial and Equestrian orders, removing his enemies and adding his allies.[36] Regional autonomy of Greek provinces was repealed.[37]

Propaganda campaign

Roman aureus depicting Vespasian as Emperor. The reverse shows the goddess Fortuna. Caption: IMP. CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG. / FORTVNA AVGVST

We know from Suetonius that the "unexpected and still quite new emperor was lacking auctoritas [English: backing, support] and a certain maiestas [English: majesty]".[38] Many modern historians note the increased amount of propaganda that appeared during Vespasian's reign.[39] A component of the propaganda was the theology of victory, which legitimized the right to rule through successful conquest.[40] This revolved around Vespasian's victory in Judea.[40] Stories of a supernatural emperor who was destined to rule circulated in the empire.[15] Nearly one-third of all coins minted in Rome under Vespasian celebrated military victory or peace.[41] The word vindex was removed from coins so as not to remind the public of rebellious Vindex. Construction projects bore inscriptions praising Vespasian and condemning previous emperors.[42] A temple of peace was constructed in the forum as well.[36]

Construction and conspiracies

Relief depicting an animal sacrifice, from an altar of the Temple of Vespasian in Pompeii
Between 71 and 79, much of Vespasian's reign is a mystery. Historians report that Vespasian ordered the construction of several buildings in Rome. Additionally, he survived several conspiracies against him. Vespasian helped rebuild Rome after the civil war. He added the temple of Peace and the temple to the Deified Claudius.[36] In 75, he erected a colossal statue of Apollo, begun under Nero, and he dedicated a stage of the theatre of Marcellus. He also began construction of the Colosseum, using funds from the spoils of the Jewish Temple after the Siege of Jerusalem.[43] Suetonius claims that Vespasian was met with "constant conspiracies" against him.[44] Only one conspiracy is known specifically, though. In 78 or 79, Eprius Marcellus and Aulus Caecina Alienus attempted to kill Vespasian. Why these men turned against Vespasian is not known.

Roman expansion in Britain

Agricola was appointed to the command of the Legio XX Valeria Victrix, stationed in Britain, in place of Marcus Roscius Coelius, who had stirred up a mutiny against the governor, Marcus Vettius Bolanus. Britain had revolted during the year of civil war, and Bolanus was a mild governor. Agricola reimposed discipline on the legion and helped to consolidate Roman rule. In 71, Bolanus was replaced by a more aggressive governor, Quintus Petillius Cerialis, and Agricola was able to display his talents as a commander in campaigns against the Brigantes in northern England.

Death

In his ninth consulship Vespasian had a slight illness in Campania and, returning at once to Rome, he left for Aquae Cutiliae and the country around Reate, where he spent every summer; however, his illness worsened and he developed severe diarrhea.

With the feeling of death overwhelming him on his deathbed, he incited: "Vae, puto deus fio." ("Dear me, I think I'm becoming a god").[45] Then, according to Suetonius' *The Twelve Caesars*:

Taken on a sudden with such an attack of diarrhoea that he all but swooned, he said: "An emperor ought to die standing," and while he was struggling to get on his feet, he died in the arms of those who tried to help him, on the ninth day before the Kalends of July [June 23], at the age of sixty-nine years, seven months and seven days.

—Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Life of Vespasian" §24[46]

He died on June 23, 79 AD, and was succeeded by his sons Titus and then Domitian.

Legacy

Construction of the Flavian Amphitheatre, better known as the Colosseum, was begun by Vespasian and finished by his son Titus.

Vespasian was known for his wit and his amiable manner alongside his commanding personality and military prowess. He could be liberal to impoverished Senators and equestrians and to cities and towns desolated by natural calamity. He was especially generous to men of letters and rhetors, several of whom he pensioned with salaries of as much as 1,000 gold pieces a year. Quintilian is said to have been the first public teacher who enjoyed this imperial favor. Pliny the Elder's work, the *Natural History*, was written during Vespasian's reign, and dedicated to Vespasian's son Titus.[47]

Vespasian distrusted philosophers in general. It was the talk of philosophers, who liked to glorify the Republic, that provoked Vespasian into reviving the obsolete penal laws against this profession as a precautionary measure.[citation needed]

He was also noted for his benefactions to the people. Much money was spent on public works and the restoration and beautification of Rome: the Temple of Peace (also known as the Forum of Vespasian), new public baths[48] and the great show piece, the Colosseum.[49]

Vespasian slightly debased the denarius during his reign, reducing the silver purity from 93.5% to 90%. The silver weight dropped from 2.97 grams to 2.87 grams.[50]

In modern Romance languages, urinals are named after him (for example, *vespasiano* in Italian, and *vespasienne* in French),[51] probably in reference to a tax he placed on urine collection.

Forging History

Vespasian approved histories written under his reign, ensuring biases against him were removed.[52] He also gave financial rewards to writers.[53] The ancient historians who lived through the period such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Josephus speak suspiciously well of Vespasian while condemning the emperors who came before him.[54] Tacitus admits that his status was elevated by Vespasian, Josephus identifies Vespasian as a patron and saviour. Meanwhile, Pliny the Elder dedicated his Natural Histories to Vespasian's son, Titus.[55]

Those who spoke against Vespasian were punished. A number of Stoic philosophers were accused of corrupting students with inappropriate teachings and were expelled from Rome.[56] Helvidius Priscus, a pro-Republic philosopher, was executed for his teachings.[57] Numerous other philosophers and writers had their works seized, destroyed and denounced for being deemed too critical of Vespasian's reign, some even posthumously.[57]

According to Suetonius' version of events, however, Vespasian "bore the frank language of his friends, the quips of pleaders, and the impudence of the philosophers with the greatest patience" as it was only Helvidius Priscus to be put to death after he repeatedly affronted the Emperor with studied insults which he initially tried to ignore;[58] the philosopher Demetrius for example was banished to an island and when Vespasian heard that Demetrius was still criticizing him, sending the exiled philosopher the message: "You are doing everything to force me to kill you, but I do not slay a barking dog." [59]

Family and personal life

Ancestors and relatives

See also: Flavia gens

Bust of Vespasian from National Archaeological Museum of Naples

His paternal grandfather, Titus Flavius Petro, became the first to distinguish himself, rising to the rank of centurion and fighting at Pharsalus for Pompey in 48 BC.

Subsequently, he became a debt collector.[11] Petro's son, Titus Flavius Sabinus, worked as a customs official in the province of Asia and became a moneylender on a small scale among the Helvetii. He earned a reputation as a scrupulous and honest "tax-farmer". Sabinus married up in status, to Vespasia Polla, whose father had risen to the rank of prefect of the camp and whose brother became a Senator.[11]

Sabinus and Vespasia had three children, the eldest of whom, a girl, died in infancy. The elder boy, Titus Flavius Sabinus, entered public life and pursued the *cursus honorum*. Vespasian on the other hand, seemed far less likely to be successful, initially not wishing to pursue high public office. He followed in his brother's footsteps when driven to it by his mother's taunting.[11]

Marriage and children

See also: Flavian dynasty

During this period he married Flavia Domitilla, the daughter of Flavius Liberalis from Ferentium and formerly the mistress of Statilius Capella, a Roman equestrian from Sabratha in Africa.[60] They had two sons, Titus Flavius Vespasianus (born 39) and Titus Flavius Domitianus (born 51), and a daughter, Domitilla (born c. 45). His wife Domitilla and his daughter Domitilla both died before Vespasian became Emperor in 69. After the death of his wife, Vespasian's long-standing mistress, Antonia Caenis, became his wife in all but formal status, a relationship that continued until she died in 75.[11]

Gallery

Portrait bust of Vespasian wearing the civic crown, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian wearing the civic crown, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian from Ostia, 69–79 AD, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian from Ostia, 69–79 AD, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome

Restored original portrait of Vespasian. Vatican Museums, Rome

Restored original portrait of Vespasian. Vatican Museums, Rome

Replica of a modern bust of Vespasian,[61] Pushkin Museum, Moscow

Replica of a modern bust of Vespasian,[61] Pushkin Museum, Moscow

Bust of Vespasian, c. 80 AD, Farnese Collection, Naples National Archaeological Museum

Bust of Vespasian, c. 80 AD, Farnese Collection, Naples National Archaeological Museum

Flavian family tree

vte

FLAVIAN DYNASTY detailed family tree

See also

Stele of Vespasian

List of Roman emperors

Pecunia non olet

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Suetonius gives 23 June (VIII. Kal. Iul.). However, he also states that he died "at the age of sixty-nine years, seven months and seven day", i.e. he died on 24 June, although it's possible that he's using inclusive counting. Cassius Dio (66.17) states that he "reigned ten years lacking six days", i.e. he died on 25/24 June. Both authors date Titus'

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Buste de Vespasien

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The CIPHERMENT of the FRANKS CASKET; A. Simmons; Vespasian is depicted on the back side of the FRANKS CASKET

External links

Wikimedia Commons has media related to Vespasian.

Vespasian

Flavian dynasty

Born: 17 November AD 9 Died: 23 June AD 79

Political offices

Preceded by

Vitellius

Roman emperor

69–79 Succeeded by

Titus

Preceded by

Gaius Quintius Atticus

Gnaeus Caecilius Simplex

Roman consul

70–72

with Titus (70)

Nerva (71)

Titus (72) Succeeded by

Domitian

Lucius Valerius Catullus Messallinus

Preceded by

Domitian

Lucius Valerius Catullus Messallinus

Roman consul

74–77

with Titus Succeeded by

Decimus Iunius Novius Priscus Rufus

Lucius Ceionius Commodus Verus

Preceded by

Decimus Iunius Novius Priscus Rufus

Lucius Ceionius Commodus

Roman consul

79

with Titus Succeeded by

Titus

Domitian

vte

Roman and Byzantine emperors and empresses regnant

vte

Pharaohs

vte

First Jewish–Roman War

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Decarabia

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AI Overview

Decarabia is a Great Marquis of Hell from the Ars Goetia, known for appearing as a five-pointed star within a pentacle, teaching about birds and precious stones, and commanding 30 legions of spirits, often depicted as a bird familiar. This demon is a popular figure in demonology and video games, particularly the Shin Megami Tensei series, where he's known for his unique star form and knowledge of herbs, gems, and birds, with lore connecting him to pagan beliefs and popular culture.

In Demonology & Occultism

Title: A Great Marquis of Hell, 69th spirit in the Lesser Key of Solomon.

Appearance: Initially a star in a pentacle, he can take human form upon request.

Powers: Reveals virtues of birds and stones, makes birds fly and sing, and governs 30 legions of spirits.

Symbolism: Can represent paganism and a connection to nature's secrets, distinct from Abrahamic faiths.

In Video Games (Shin Megami Tensei & Persona)

Design: Often appears as a star, sometimes with "puppy dog eyes" inspired by the Taco Bell chihuahua.

Lore: Frequently appears with the demon Forneus; a fusion spell called "Best Friends" (buffs ally stats) exists in Persona 3.

Arcana: Typically Fool Arcana, shifting to Councillor in Persona 5 Royal.

Roles: A boss, a playable demon, or a mascot in various Megami Tensei titles, appearing in Nocturne, IV, P3, P5, etc.

Other Appearances

Castlevania: Appears as a rolling, starfish-like enemy.

Shakugan no Shana: A character associated with rivers and Bal Masqué.

Decarabia - Megami Tensei Wiki - Fandom

Appearances * Shin Megami Tensei: Fallen Race. Shin Megami Tensei EDEN. * Shin Megami Tensei: if...: Fallen Race. * Shin Megami T...

Megami Tensei Wiki

Decarabia | Viva Gordita! - The Demonic Compendium

Oct 6, 2020 — now this is an episode many of you have wanted me to do for the past few months now whether you've realized it or not.

YouTube ·
Strain42

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However, it could also likely mean that he leans towards the more paganistic section of belief, completely cutting ties with God a...

The Demonic Paradise Wiki

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- Occult Encyclopedia

<https://www.occult.live> › title=Decarabia

Apr 16, 2024 — Decarabia (Hebrew: דְּכַאֲרַבָּא) is a Goetic demon. It is the 69th spirit of the 72 demons summoned by King Solomon according to the Lesser Key ...

People also ask

What is Decarabia?

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<https://mythus.fandom.com> › wiki › Decarabia

Decarabia is a demon and, according to the Lesser Key of Solomon, a Great Marquis of Hell, or a King and Earl according to the original Latin version.

Decarabia

Shin Megami Tensei IMAGINE Wiki

<https://wiki.megatenonline.ru> › Decarabia

Aug 20, 2025 — Decarabia (or Carabia) is the sixty-ninth spirit listed in the Goetia. he is a Great Marquis of Hell and has thirty legions of demons under his ...

Decarabia

DeliriumsRealm.com

<https://www.deliriumsrealm.com> › Articles

The Sixty-ninth Spirit is Decarabia. He appeareth in the Form of a Star in a Pentacle, at first; but after, at the command of the Exorcist, he putteth on the ...

Decarabia

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Artist: Future Palace Composer, Lyricist, Electric Guitar: Manuel Kohlert Vocals,
Composer, Lyricist: Maria Lessing
Decarabia | Megami Tensei Wiki - Fandom

Megami Tensei Wiki

<https://megamitensei.fandom.com/wiki/Decarabia>

Decarabia, also known as Carabia, is the sixty-ninth demonic spirit listed in the Ars Goetia, according to the writings in the Lesser Key of Solomon.

Videos

FUTURE PALACE - Decarabia (OFFICIAL VIDEO)

YouTube · Arising Empire

Aug 1, 2024

YouTube · Arising Empire

3:41

Who is Decarabia: Ars Goetia Demons SMT Lore

YouTube · Tony4You

Apr 8, 2024

YouTube · Tony4You

1:00

Decarabia is a demon who appears as a star in a pentacle, can appraise gemstones, and can make birds fly and sing.

Who is Decarabia: Ars Goetia Demons Explained #religion ...

YouTube · Tony4You

Aug 4, 2025

YouTube · Tony4You

0:58

Decarabia, the 69th spirit, appears as a star in a pentacle, then a man. He discovers bird virtues, makes birds fly, and governs 30 legions.

Feedback

View all

Decarabia

Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decarabia>

Decarabia - Wikipedia Home. List of demons in the Ars Goetia#Decarabia Learn more

This page is a redirect.

Decarabia

SMT: Dx2 Wiki

<https://dx2wiki.com> › index.php › Decarabia

Sep 23, 2025 — One of the 72 demons of the Goetia. This odd demon usually appears as a pentagram, but can show himself in human form if his summoner wishes. ...

Short videos

1:00

Who is Decarabia: Ars Goetia Demons SMT Lore

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Decarabia

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Decarabia as depicted in the Occult Tarot

Decarabia (Hebrew: דכאוראב) is a Goetic demon. It is the 69th spirit of the 72 demons summoned by King Solomon according to the Lesser Key of Solomon. In the hierarchy of Hell, Decarabia is a great marquis.

He is ruled over by the Kabbalistic angel Rochel.

General description

Decarabia appears as a star in a pentacle at first; but at the command of the exorcist, he puts on the image of a man.

Abilities

His office is to discover the virtues of birds and precious stones, and to make all kinds of birds fly before the exorcist, singing and drinking as natural birds do. He governs 30 legions of spirits. Astrologically, this spirit signifies fines and unfair costs.

Decarabia is a servant demon of those born February 23 - 27.

Goetic demons of the Lesser Key of Solomon

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From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For others with the given name or surname, see [Vespasian \(name\)](#).

Vespasian

Front view of a bust.

Bust at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek

Roman emperor

Reign 1 July 69 – 23 June 79

Predecessor Vitellius

Successor Titus

Born Titus Flavius Vespasianus

17 November 9 AD[1]

Falacrinum, Italy

Died 23 June 79 (aged 69)[4]

Aquae Cutiliae

Burial Rome

Spouses

Domitilla the Elder (died before 69)

Caenis (mistress and later concubine after his wife's death c. 65–74)

Issue

Detail

Titus

Domitilla the Younger

Domitian

Regnal name

Imperator Caesar Vespasianus Augustus[5]

Dynasty Flavian

Father Titus Flavius Sabinus

Mother Vespasia Polla

Vespasian (/vɛsˈpeɪʒ(i)ən, -ziən/; Latin: Vespasianus [vɛspasjˈaːnus]; 17 November AD 9 – 23 June 79) was Roman emperor from 69 to 79. The last emperor to reign in the Year of the Four Emperors, he founded the Flavian dynasty, which ruled the empire for 27 years. His fiscal reforms and consolidation of the empire brought political stability and a vast building program.

Vespasian was the first emperor from an equestrian family who rose only later in his lifetime into the senatorial rank as the first of his family to do so. He rose to prominence through military achievement:[6] he served as legate of Legio II Augusta during the Roman invasion of Britain in 43, and later led the suppression of the Jewish rebellion of 66–70.[7]

While he was engaged in the campaign in Judaea, Emperor Nero died by suicide in June 68, plunging Rome into a year of civil war known as the Year of the Four Emperors. After Galba and Otho perished in quick succession, Vitellius became emperor in April 69. The Roman legions of Egypt and Judaea reacted by declaring Vespasian, their commander, the emperor on 1 July 69.[8] In his bid for imperial power, Vespasian joined forces with Mucianus, the governor of Syria, and Primus, a general in Pannonia, leaving his son Titus to command the besieging forces at Jerusalem. Primus and Mucianus led the Flavian forces against Vitellius, while Vespasian took control of Egypt. On 20 December 69, Vitellius was defeated, and the following day Vespasian was declared emperor by the Senate.[9]

Little information survives about the government during Vespasian's ten-year rule. He

reformed the financial system of the Roman Empire after the campaign against Judaea ended successfully, and initiated several ambitious construction projects, including the building of the Flavian Amphitheatre, better known today as the Colosseum. Through his general Agricola, Vespasian increased imperial expansion in Britain. Vespasian is often credited with restoring political stability to Rome following the chaotic reigns of his predecessors. After he died in 79, he was succeeded by his eldest son Titus, thus becoming the first Roman emperor to be succeeded by his natural son and establishing the Flavian dynasty.

Early life

Vespasian (born Titus Flavius Vespasianus, pronounced ['tɪtʊs 'flɑːwɪjʊs wɛs.pəsi 'jɑːnʊs]) was born in a village north-east of Rome called Falacrinae.[10] His family was relatively undistinguished and lacking in pedigree. Vespasian was the son of Titus Flavius Sabinus, a Roman moneylender, debt collector, and tax collector. His mother, Vespasia Polla, also belonged to the equestrian order in society, with her father rising to the rank of prefect of the camp and her brother becoming a Senator.[11]

He was educated in the countryside, in Cosa, near what is today Ansedonia, Italy, under the guidance of his paternal grandmother, so much so that even when he became emperor, he often returned to the places of his childhood, having left the former villa exactly as it had been.[12]

Early in his life he was somewhat overshadowed by his older brother, Titus Flavius Sabinus, who had entered public life and pursued the *cursus honorum*, holding an important military command in the Danube.

Military and political career

Early career

Vespasian leading his forces against the Jewish revolt, a miniature in a 1470 illuminated manuscript version of the history of Josephus

In preparation for a praetorship, Vespasian needed two periods of service in the minor magistracies, one military and the other public. Vespasian served in the military in Thracia for about three years. On his return to Rome in about 30 AD, he obtained a post in the vigintivirate, the minor magistracies, most probably in one of the posts in charge of street cleaning.[13] His early performance was so unsuccessful that Emperor Caligula reportedly stuffed handfuls of muck down his toga to correct the uncleaned Roman streets, formally his responsibility.[11]

During the period of the ascendancy of Sejanus, there is no record of Vespasian engaging in any significant political activity. After completion of a term in the vigintivirate, Vespasian was entitled to stand for election as quaestor, a senatorial office. However, his lack of political or family influence meant that Vespasian served as quaestor in one of the provincial posts in Crete, rather than as assistant to important men in Rome.[13]

Next he needed to gain a praetorship, carrying the Imperium, but non-patricians and the less well-connected had to serve in at least one intermediary post as an aedile or tribune. Vespasian failed at his first attempt to gain an aedileship but was successful in his second attempt, becoming an aedile in 38. Despite his lack of significant family connections or success in office, he achieved praetorship in either 39 or 40, at the youngest age permitted (30), during a period of political upheaval in the organisation of elections. His long-standing relationship with freed-woman Antonia Caenis, confidential secretary to Antonia Minor (the Emperor's grandmother) and part of the circle of courtiers and servants around the Emperor, may have contributed to his success.[13]

Invasion of Britannia

Upon the accession of Claudius as emperor in 41, Vespasian was appointed legate of Legio II Augusta, stationed in Germania, thanks to the influence of the Imperial freedman Narcissus. In 43, Vespasian and the II Augusta participated in the Roman invasion of Britain, and he distinguished himself under the overall command of Aulus Plautius. After participating in crucial early battles on the rivers Medway and Thames, he was sent to reduce the south west, penetrating through regions later known as the counties of Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall with the probable objectives of securing the south coast ports and harbours along with the tin mines of Cornwall and the silver and lead mines of Somerset.

Vespasian marched from Noviomagus Reginorum (Chichester) to subdue the hostile Durotriges and Dumnonii tribes,[14] and captured twenty oppida (towns, or more probably hill forts, including Hod Hill and Maiden Castle in Dorset). He also invaded Vectis (now the Isle of Wight), finally setting up a fortress and legionary headquarters at Isca Dumnoniorum (Exeter). During this time he injured himself and had not fully recovered until he went to Egypt. These successes earned him triumphal regalia (ornamenta triumphalia) on his return to Rome.

Later political career

Roman Emperor Nero sends Vespasian with an army to put down the Jewish revolt, AD 66 (depiction of 1503)

His success as the legate of a legion earned him a consulship in 51, after which he retired from public life, having incurred the enmity of Claudius' wife, Agrippina, who was the most powerful and influential figure in her husband's reign.[11] He came out of retirement in 63 when he was sent as governor to Africa Province. According to Tacitus (ii.97), his rule was "infamous and odious" but according to Suetonius (Vesp. 4), he was "upright and, highly honourable". On one occasion, Suetonius writes, Vespasian was pelted with turnips.

Vespasian used his time in North Africa wisely. Usually, governorships were seen by ex-consuls as opportunities to extort huge amounts of money to regain the wealth they had spent on their previous political campaigns. Corruption was so rife that it was almost expected that a governor would come back from these appointments with his pockets

full. However, Vespasian used his time in North Africa making friends instead of money, something that would be far more valuable in the years to come. During his time in North Africa, he found himself in financial difficulties and was forced to mortgage his estates to his brother. To revive his fortunes he turned to the mule trade and gained the nickname *mulio* (muleteer).[15]

Returning from Africa, Vespasian toured Greece in Nero's retinue, but lost Imperial favor after paying insufficient attention (some sources suggest he fell asleep) during one of the Emperor's recitals on the lyre, and found himself in the political wilderness.

First Jewish Revolt

Main article: First Jewish–Roman War

Vespasian *sestertius*, struck in 71 to celebrate the victory in the first Jewish–Roman War. Obverse: IMP. CAES. VESPASIAN AVG. P. M., TR. P., P. P., COS. III. The legend on the reverse says: IVDEA CAPTA, "Judea conquered" – S. C.

In 66 AD, Vespasian was appointed to suppress the Jewish revolt underway in Judea. The fighting there had killed the previous governor and routed Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, when he tried to restore order. Two legions, with eight cavalry squadrons and ten auxiliary cohorts, were therefore dispatched under the command of Vespasian while his elder son, Titus, arrived from Alexandria with another.

During this time he became the patron of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish resistance leader captured at the Siege of Yodfat, who would later write his people's history in Greek. Ultimately, thousands of Jews were killed and the Romans destroyed many towns in re-establishing control over Judea; they also took Jerusalem in 70. Vespasian is remembered by Josephus (writing as a Roman citizen), in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, as a fair and humane official, in contrast with the notorious Herod Agrippa II whom Josephus goes to great lengths to demonize.

While under the emperor's patronage, Josephus wrote that after the Roman *Legio X Fretensis*, accompanied by Vespasian, destroyed Jericho on 21 June 68, Vespasian took a group of Jews who could not swim (possibly Essenes from Qumran), fettered them, and threw them into the Dead Sea to test the sea's legendary buoyancy. Indeed, the captives bobbed up to the surface after being thrown in the water from the boats.

At the conclusion of the Jewish war, Josephus discussed a prophecy from sacred scripture that about the time when Jerusalem and the Second Temple would be taken, a man from their own nation would become "governor of the habitable earth", as in the Messiah. Josephus interpreted the prophecy as denoting the government of Vespasian. [16] Tacitus agreed that the prophecy discussed Vespasian (as well as Titus), but that "the common people, with the usual blindness of ambition, had interpreted these mighty destinies of themselves, and could not be brought even by disasters to believe the truth." [17]

Year of the Four Emperors (69)

Main article: Year of the Four Emperors

Map of the Roman Empire during the Year of the Four Emperors (69). Blue areas indicate provinces loyal to Vespasian and Gaius Licinius Mucianus. [dubious – discuss]

Roman imperial dynasties

Year of the Four Emperors

Chronology

Galba68–69

Otho69

Vitellius69

Vespasian69–79

Succession

Preceded by

Julio-Claudian dynasty Followed by

Flavian dynasty

vte

After the death of Nero in 68, Rome saw a succession of short-lived emperors and a year of civil wars. Galba was murdered by supporters of Otho, who was defeated by Vitellius. Otho's supporters, looking for another candidate to support, settled on Vespasian. According to Suetonius, a prophecy ubiquitous in the Eastern provinces claimed that from Judaea would come the future rulers of the world. Vespasian eventually believed that this prophecy applied to him, and found a number of omens and oracles that reinforced this belief.[18]

Although Vespasian and Titus resolved to challenge for the Principate in February 69, they made no move until later in the year. Throughout the early months of 69, Vespasian convened frequently with the Eastern generals. Gaius Licinius Mucianus was a notable ally. Governor of Syria and commander of three legions, Mucianus also held political connections to many of the most powerful Roman military commanders from Illyricum to Britannia by virtue of his service to the famous Neronian general Gnaeus Domitius Corbulo. In May 69, Mucianus formally implored Vespasian to challenge Vitellius. His appeal was followed by Vespasian's official proclamation as Emperor in early July. Under instructions from the prefect Tiberius Alexander, the legions at Alexandria took an oath of loyalty to Vespasian on 1 July. They were swiftly followed by Vespasian's Judaeans legions on 3 July and thereafter by Mucianus' Syrian legions on 15 July.[19]

Vitellius, the occupant of the throne, had the veteran legions of Gaul and the Rhineland. But the feeling in Vespasian's favour quickly gathered strength, and the armies of Moesia, Pannonia, and Illyricum soon declared for him.[20] The praefectus Aegypti, who had been governor since Nero's reign, proclaimed Vespasian emperor at Alexandria on 1 July 69 AD.[21]:13

While Vespasian himself was in Egypt, his troops entered Italy from the northeast under the leadership of Marcus Antonius Primus. They defeated Vitellius' army (which had

awaited him in Mevania) at Bedriacum (or Betriacum), sacked Cremona and advanced on Rome. Vitellius hastily arranged a peace with Antonius, but the Emperor's Praetorian Guard forced him to retain his seat. After furious fighting, Antonius' army entered Rome. In the resulting confusion, the Capitol was destroyed by fire and both Vitellius and Vespasian's brother Sabinus were killed.[20] At Alexandria, Vespasian immediately sent supplies of urgently needed grain to Rome, along with an edict assuring he would reverse the laws of Nero, especially those relating to treason.[citation needed]

He was the first emperor since Augustus to appear in Egypt.[22]: 13 While there, he visited the Temple of Serapis where he reportedly experienced a vision, and he performed healing miracles.[20][23][22]: 14 He was hailed as pharaoh and proclaimed the son of the creator-deity Amun (Zeus-Ammon) in the style of the ancient pharaohs, and an incarnation of Serapis in the manner of the Ptolemies.[22]: 13–14

Emperor (69–79)

Aftermath of the civil war

Roman imperial dynasties

Flavian dynasty

Chronology

Vespasian69–79 CE

Titus79–81 CE

Domitian81–96 CE

Family

Gens FlaviaFlavian treeCategory:Flavian dynasty

Preceded by

Year of

the Four Emperors Followed by

Nerva–Antonine dynasty

vte

Triumph of Titus and Vespasian by Giulio Romano, ca. 1540.

Vespasian was declared emperor by the Senate while he was in Egypt on 21 December 69 through the passage of the *Lex de imperio Vespasiani*; the Egyptians had declared him emperor in the summer. In the short-term, administration of the empire was given to Mucianus, who was aided by Vespasian's son, Domitian. Mucianus started off Vespasian's rule with tax reform that was to restore the empire's finances. After Vespasian arrived in Rome in mid-70, Mucianus continued to press Vespasian to collect as many taxes as possible.[24]

Vespasian and Mucianus renewed old taxes and instituted new ones, increased the tribute of the provinces, and kept a watchful eye upon the treasury officials.

Before Vespasian, Emperor Nero introduced a urine tax on public toilets under the name of *vectigal urinae* in the 1st century AD (see Pay toilet). However, the tax was removed after a while and it was Vespasian's new imposition of this tax around AD 70 which we

still remember to this day, possibly giving origin to the Latin proverb Pecunia non olet ("Money does not stink"):[25] Writing about Vespasian in their history books, Dio Cassius and Suetonius mentioned "When [Vespasian's] son Titus blamed him for even laying a tax upon urine, he applied to his nose a piece of the money he received in the first instalment, and asked him if it stunk. And he replying no, 'And yet,' said he, 'it is derived from urine". Since then, this phrase "Money does not stink" has been used to whitewash dubious or illegal origin of money.[26][27][25][28][29][30]

Turmoil through the Empire

In early 70 Vespasian was still in Egypt, the source of Rome's grain supply, and had not yet left for Rome. According to Tacitus, his trip was delayed due to bad weather.[31] Modern historians theorize that Vespasian had been and was continuing to consolidate support from the Egyptians before departing.[32] During this period, protests erupted in Alexandria over his new tax policies and grain shipments were held up. Vespasian eventually restored order and grain shipments to Rome resumed.[24] Notably Titus attended the consecration of a new Apis bull at Memphis in 70, and Vespasian's reign saw imperial patronage given to Egyptian temples: at the Dakhla Oasis in the Western Desert as well as Esna, Kom Ombo, Medinet Habu, Silsila in the Nile Valley.[22]: 14

In addition to the uprising in Egypt, unrest and civil war continued in the rest of the empire in 70. Judea had been rebelling since 66. Vespasian's son, Titus, finally subdued the rebellion with the capture of Jerusalem and destruction of the Jewish Temple in 70. According to Eusebius, Vespasian then ordered all descendants of the royal line of David to be hunted down, causing the Jews to be persecuted from province to province. Several modern historians have suggested that Vespasian, already having been told by Josephus that he was prophesied to become emperor whilst in Judaea, was probably reacting to other widely known Messianic prophecies circulating at the time, to suppress any rival claimants arising from that dynasty.[33] The Jewish temple at Leontopolis was sacked in 73.[22]: 14

In January 70, an uprising occurred in Gaul and Germany, known as the second Batavian Rebellion. This rebellion was headed by Gaius Julius Civilis and Julius Sabinus. Sabinus, claiming he was descended from Julius Caesar, declared himself Emperor of Gaul. The rebellion defeated and absorbed two Roman legions before it was suppressed by Vespasian's son-in-law, Quintus Petillius Cerialis, by the end of 70.

Arrival in Rome and consolidation of power

In mid-70, Vespasian first went to Rome, dating his tribunician years from 1 July 69.[9] Vespasian immediately embarked on a series of efforts to stay in power and prevent future revolts. He offered gifts to many in the military and much of the public.[34] Soldiers loyal to Vitellius were dismissed or punished.[35] Vespasian also restructured the Senatorial and Equestrian orders, removing his enemies and adding his allies.[36] Regional autonomy of Greek provinces was repealed.[37]

Propaganda campaign

Roman aureus depicting Vespasian as Emperor. The reverse shows the goddess Fortuna. Caption: IMP. CAESAR VESPASIANVS AVG. / FORTVNA AVGVST

We know from Suetonius that the "unexpected and still quite new emperor was lacking auctoritas [English: backing, support] and a certain maiestas [English: majesty]".[38] Many modern historians note the increased amount of propaganda that appeared during Vespasian's reign.[39] A component of the propaganda was the theology of victory, which legitimized the right to rule through successful conquest.[40] This revolved around Vespasian's victory in Judea.[40] Stories of a supernatural emperor who was destined to rule circulated in the empire.[15] Nearly one-third of all coins minted in Rome under Vespasian celebrated military victory or peace.[41] The word vindex was removed from coins so as not to remind the public of rebellious Vindex. Construction projects bore inscriptions praising Vespasian and condemning previous emperors.[42] A temple of peace was constructed in the forum as well.[36]

Construction and conspiracies

Relief depicting an animal sacrifice, from an altar of the Temple of Vespasian in Pompeii

Between 71 and 79, much of Vespasian's reign is a mystery. Historians report that Vespasian ordered the construction of several buildings in Rome. Additionally, he survived several conspiracies against him. Vespasian helped rebuild Rome after the civil war. He added the temple of Peace and the temple to the Deified Claudius.[36] In 75, he erected a colossal statue of Apollo, begun under Nero, and he dedicated a stage of the theatre of Marcellus. He also began construction of the Colosseum, using funds from the spoils of the Jewish Temple after the Siege of Jerusalem.[43] Suetonius claims that Vespasian was met with "constant conspiracies" against him.[44] Only one conspiracy is known specifically, though. In 78 or 79, Eprius Marcellus and Aulus Caecina Alienus attempted to kill Vespasian. Why these men turned against Vespasian is not known.

Roman expansion in Britain

Agricola was appointed to the command of the Legio XX Valeria Victrix, stationed in Britain, in place of Marcus Roscius Coelius, who had stirred up a mutiny against the governor, Marcus Vettius Bolanus. Britain had revolted during the year of civil war, and Bolanus was a mild governor. Agricola reimposed discipline on the legion and helped to consolidate Roman rule. In 71, Bolanus was replaced by a more aggressive governor, Quintus Petillius Cerialis, and Agricola was able to display his talents as a commander in campaigns against the Brigantes in northern England.

Death

In his ninth consulship Vespasian had a slight illness in Campania and, returning at once to Rome, he left for Aquae Cutiliae and the country around Reate, where he spent every summer; however, his illness worsened and he developed severe diarrhea.

With the feeling of death overwhelming him on his deathbed, he incited: "Vae, puto deus fio." ("Dear me, I think I'm becoming a god").[45] Then, according to Suetonius' The

Twelve Caesars:

Taken on a sudden with such an attack of diarrhoea that he all but swooned, he said: "An emperor ought to die standing," and while he was struggling to get on his feet, he died in the arms of those who tried to help him, on the ninth day before the Kalends of July [June 23], at the age of sixty-nine years, seven months and seven days.

—Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, "Life of Vespasian" §24[46]
He died on June 23, 79 AD, and was succeeded by his sons Titus and then Domitian.

Legacy

Construction of the Flavian Amphitheatre, better known as the Colosseum, was begun by Vespasian and finished by his son Titus.

Vespasian was known for his wit and his amiable manner alongside his commanding personality and military prowess. He could be liberal to impoverished Senators and equestrians and to cities and towns desolated by natural calamity. He was especially generous to men of letters and rhetors, several of whom he pensioned with salaries of as much as 1,000 gold pieces a year. Quintilian is said to have been the first public teacher who enjoyed this imperial favor. Pliny the Elder's work, the *Natural History*, was written during Vespasian's reign, and dedicated to Vespasian's son Titus.[47]

Vespasian distrusted philosophers in general. It was the talk of philosophers, who liked to glorify the Republic, that provoked Vespasian into reviving the obsolete penal laws against this profession as a precautionary measure.[citation needed]

He was also noted for his benefactions to the people. Much money was spent on public works and the restoration and beautification of Rome: the Temple of Peace (also known as the Forum of Vespasian), new public baths[48] and the great show piece, the Colosseum.[49]

Vespasian slightly debased the denarius during his reign, reducing the silver purity from 93.5% to 90%. The silver weight dropped from 2.97 grams to 2.87 grams.[50]

In modern Romance languages, urinals are named after him (for example, *vespasiano* in Italian, and *vespasienne* in French),[51] probably in reference to a tax he placed on urine collection.

Forging History

Vespasian approved histories written under his reign, ensuring biases against him were removed.[52] He also gave financial rewards to writers.[53] The ancient historians who lived through the period such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Josephus speak suspiciously well of Vespasian while condemning the emperors who came before him.[54] Tacitus admits that his status was elevated by Vespasian, Josephus identifies Vespasian as a patron and saviour. Meanwhile, Pliny the Elder dedicated his *Natural Histories* to

Vespasian's son, Titus.[55]

Those who spoke against Vespasian were punished. A number of Stoic philosophers were accused of corrupting students with inappropriate teachings and were expelled from Rome.[56] Helvidius Priscus, a pro-Republic philosopher, was executed for his teachings.[57] Numerous other philosophers and writers had their works seized, destroyed and denounced for being deemed too critical of Vespasian's reign, some even posthumously.[57]

According to Suetonius' version of events, however, Vespasian "bore the frank language of his friends, the quips of pleaders, and the impudence of the philosophers with the greatest patience" as it was only Helvidius Priscus to be put to death after he repeatedly affronted the Emperor with studied insults which he initially tried to ignore;[58] the philosopher Demetrius for example was banished to an island and when Vespasian heard that Demetrius was still criticizing him, sending the exiled philosopher the message: "You are doing everything to force me to kill you, but I do not slay a barking dog." [59]

Family and personal life

Ancestors and relatives

See also: Flavia gens

Bust of Vespasian from National Archaeological Museum of Naples

His paternal grandfather, Titus Flavius Petro, became the first to distinguish himself, rising to the rank of centurion and fighting at Pharsalus for Pompey in 48 BC.

Subsequently, he became a debt collector.[11] Petro's son, Titus Flavius Sabinus, worked as a customs official in the province of Asia and became a moneylender on a small scale among the Helvetii. He earned a reputation as a scrupulous and honest "tax-farmer". Sabinus married up in status, to Vespasia Polla, whose father had risen to the rank of prefect of the camp and whose brother became a Senator.[11]

Sabinus and Vespasia had three children, the eldest of whom, a girl, died in infancy. The elder boy, Titus Flavius Sabinus, entered public life and pursued the *cursus honorum*. Vespasian on the other hand, seemed far less likely to be successful, initially not wishing to pursue high public office. He followed in his brother's footsteps when driven to it by his mother's taunting.[11]

Marriage and children

See also: Flavian dynasty

During this period he married Flavia Domitilla, the daughter of Flavius Liberalis from Ferentium and formerly the mistress of Statilius Capella, a Roman equestrian from Sabratha in Africa.[60] They had two sons, Titus Flavius Vespasianus (born 39) and Titus Flavius Domitianus (born 51), and a daughter, Domitilla (born c. 45). His wife Domitilla and his daughter Domitilla both died before Vespasian became Emperor in 69. After the death of his wife, Vespasian's long-standing mistress, Antonia Caenis, became

his wife in all but formal status, a relationship that continued until she died in 75.[11]

Gallery

Portrait bust of Vespasian wearing the civic crown, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian wearing the civic crown, Palazzo Massimo, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian from Ostia, 69–79 AD, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome

Portrait bust of Vespasian from Ostia, 69–79 AD, Palazzo Massimo alle Terme, Rome

Restored original portrait of Vespasian. Vatican Museums, Rome

Restored original portrait of Vespasian. Vatican Museums, Rome

Replica of a modern bust of Vespasian,[61] Pushkin Museum, Moscow

Replica of a modern bust of Vespasian,[61] Pushkin Museum, Moscow

Bust of Vespasian, c. 80 AD, Farnese Collection, Naples National Archaeological Museum

Bust of Vespasian, c. 80 AD, Farnese Collection, Naples National Archaeological Museum

Flavian family tree

vte

FLAVIAN DYNASTY detailed family tree

See also

Stele of Vespasian

List of Roman emperors

Pecunia non olet

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Further reading

De Imperatoribus Romanis, biography

Entry on Vespasian in historical sourcebook by Mahlon H. Smith

Private collection of coins minted by Vespasian

The CIPHERMENT of the FRANKS CASKET; A. SIMMONS; VESPASIAN is depicted on the back side of the FRANKS CASKET

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Wikimedia Commons has media related to Vespasian.

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Flavian dynasty

Born: 17 November AD 9 Died: 23 June AD 79

Political offices

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Roman emperor

69–79 Succeeded by

Titus

Preceded by

Gaius Quintius Atticus

Gnaeus Caecilius Simplex

Roman consul

70–72

with Titus (70)

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Domitian

Lucius Valerius Catullus Messallinus

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74–77

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<https://www.theorionlines.com> › discoveries

The Nazca Alien Mummies connected to King Akhenaten & Queen Nefertiti. They weren't their 'children,' they are "Aten, The One True God.

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Introduction - Asylums: Topics in Chronicling America

Library of Congress Research Guides (.gov)

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Jan 6, 2019 — it's really just about a legit experience with Asylum - and the people that play it - that indeed affected my real life in more than one way. ...

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Joy Vernon

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A picture of the E8 root system

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The E_8 root system consists of 240 vectors in an eight-dimensional space. Those vectors are the vertices (corners) of an object called the Gosset polytope 421 .

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Table of Lie groups

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In mathematics, **E8** is any of several closely related exceptional simple Lie groups, linear algebraic groups or Lie algebras of dimension 248; the same notation is used for the corresponding root lattice, which has rank 8. The designation E8 comes from the Cartan–Killing classification of the complex simple Lie algebras, which fall into four infinite series labeled A_n , B_n , C_n , D_n , and five exceptional cases labeled G_2 , F_4 , E_6 , E_7 , and E_8 . The E_8 algebra is the largest and most complicated of these exceptional cases.

Basic description

The Lie group E_8 has dimension 248. Its rank, which is the dimension of its maximal torus, is eight.

Therefore, the vectors of the root system are in eight-dimensional Euclidean space: they are described explicitly later in this article. The Weyl group of E_8 , which is the group of symmetries of the maximal torus that are induced by conjugations in the whole group, has order $2^{14} \cdot 3^5 \cdot 5 \cdot 7 = 696729600$.

The compact group E_8 is unique among simple compact Lie groups in that its non-trivial representation of smallest dimension is the adjoint representation (of dimension 248) acting on the Lie algebra E_8 itself; it is also the unique one that has the following four properties: trivial center, compact, simply connected, and simply laced (all roots have the same length).

There is a Lie algebra E_k for every integer $k \geq 3$. The largest value of k for which E_k is finite-dimensional is $k = 8$, that is, E_k is infinite-dimensional for any $k > 8$.

Real and complex forms

There is a unique complex Lie algebra of type E_8 , corresponding to a complex group of complex dimension 248. The complex Lie group E_8 of complex dimension 248 can be considered as a simple real Lie group of real dimension 496. This is simply connected, has maximal compact subgroup the compact form (see below) of E_8 , and has an outer automorphism group of order 2 generated by complex conjugation.

As well as the complex Lie group of type E_8 , there are three real forms of the Lie algebra, three real forms of the group with trivial center (two of which have non-algebraic double covers, giving two further real forms), all of real dimension 248, as follows:

The compact form (which is usually the one meant if no other information is given), which is simply connected and has trivial outer automorphism group.

The split form, $EVIII$ (or $E_8(8)$), which has maximal compact subgroup $Spin(16)/(Z/2Z)$,

fundamental group of order 2 (implying that it has a double cover, which is a simply connected Lie real group but is not algebraic, see below) and has trivial outer automorphism group.

E_{IX} (or $E_8(-24)$), which has maximal compact subgroup $E_7 \times SU(2)/(-1, -1)$, fundamental group of order 2 (again implying a double cover, which is not algebraic) and has trivial outer automorphism group.

For a complete list of real forms of simple Lie algebras, see the list of simple Lie groups.

E_8 as an algebraic group

By means of a Chevalley basis for the Lie algebra, one can define E_8 as a linear algebraic group over the integers and, consequently, over any commutative ring and in particular over any field: this defines the so-called split (sometimes also known as "untwisted") form of E_8 . Over an algebraically closed field, this is the only form; however, over other fields, there are often many other forms, or "twists" of E_8 , which are classified in the general framework of Galois cohomology (over a perfect field k) by the set $H^1(k, \text{Aut}(E_8))$, which, because the Dynkin diagram of E_8 (see below) has no automorphisms, coincides with $H^1(k, E_8)$. [1]

Over $\mathbb{R}$, the real connected component of the identity of these algebraically twisted forms of E_8 coincide with the three real Lie groups mentioned above, but with a subtlety concerning the fundamental group: all forms of E_8 are simply connected in the sense of algebraic geometry, meaning that they admit no non-trivial algebraic coverings; the non-compact and simply connected real Lie group forms of E_8 are therefore not algebraic and admit no faithful finite-dimensional representations.

Over finite fields, the Lang–Steinberg theorem implies that $H^1(k, E_8) = 0$, meaning that E_8 has no twisted forms: see below.

The characters of finite dimensional representations of the real and complex Lie algebras and Lie groups are all given by the Weyl character formula. The dimensions of the smallest irreducible representations are (sequence A121732 in the OEIS):

1, 248, 3875, 27000, 30380, 147250, 779247, 1763125, 2450240, 4096000, 4881384, 6696000, 26411008, 70680000, 76271625, 79143000, 146325270, 203205000, 281545875, 301694976, 344452500, 820260000, 1094951000, 2172667860, 2275896000, 2642777280, 2903770000, 3929713760, 4076399250, 4825673125, 6899079264, 8634368000 (twice), 12692520960...

The 248-dimensional representation is the adjoint representation. There are two non-isomorphic irreducible representations of dimension 8634368000 (it is not unique; however, the next integer with this property is 175898504162692612600853299200000 (sequence A181746 in the OEIS)). The fundamental representations are those with dimensions 3875, 6696000, 6899079264, 146325270, 2450240, 30380, 248 and 147250 (corresponding to the eight nodes in the Dynkin diagram in the order chosen for the Cartan matrix below, i.e., the nodes are read in the seven-node chain first, with the last node being connected to the third).

The coefficients of the character formulas for infinite dimensional irreducible representations of E8 depend on some large square matrices consisting of polynomials, the Lusztig–Vogan polynomials, an analogue of Kazhdan–Lusztig polynomials introduced for reductive groups in general by George Lusztig and David Kazhdan (1983). The values at 1 of the Lusztig–Vogan polynomials give the coefficients of the matrices relating the standard representations (whose characters are easy to describe) with the irreducible representations.

These matrices were computed after four years of collaboration by a group of 18 mathematicians and computer scientists, led by Jeffrey Adams, with much of the programming done by Fokko du Cloux. The most difficult case (for exceptional groups) is the split real form of E8 (see above), where the largest matrix is of size 453060×453060. The Lusztig–Vogan polynomials for all other exceptional simple groups have been known for some time; the calculation for the split form of E8 is far longer than any other case. The announcement of the result in March 2007 received extraordinary attention from the media (see the external links), to the surprise of the mathematicians working on it.

The representations of the E8 groups over finite fields are given by Deligne–Lusztig theory.

Constructions

One can construct the (compact form of the) E8 group as the automorphism group of the corresponding e8 Lie algebra. This algebra has a 120-dimensional subalgebra so(16) generated by Jij as well as 128 new generators Qa that transform as a Weyl–Majorana spinor of spin(16). These statements determine the commutators

$$[J_{ij}, J_{kl}] = \delta_{jk} J_{il} - \delta_{il} J_{jk} - \delta_{ij} J_{kl} - \delta_{kl} J_{ij}$$

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$\left\{ \displaystyle \left[J_{ij}, J_{k\ell} \right] \right\} = \delta_{jk} J_{i\ell} - \delta_{j\ell} J_{ik} - \delta_{ik} J_{j\ell} + \delta_{i\ell} J_{jk}$

as well as

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$$\left\{\displaystyle \left[J_{ij},Q_a\right]=\frac{1}{4}\left(\gamma_i\gamma_j-\gamma_j\gamma_i\right)_{ab}Q_b,\right\}$$

while the remaining commutators (not anticommutators!) between the spinor generators are defined as

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$$\left\{\displaystyle \left[Q_a,Q_b\right]=\gamma_{ac}^{\left[i\right]}\gamma_{cb}^{\left[j\right]}J_{ij}.\right\}$$

It is then possible to check that the Jacobi identity is satisfied.

Geometry

The compact real form of E8 is the isometry group of the 128-dimensional exceptional compact Riemannian symmetric space EVIII (in Cartan's classification). It is known informally as the "octooctonionic projective plane" because it can be built using an algebra that is the tensor product of the octonions with themselves, and is also known as a Rosenfeld projective plane, though it does not obey the usual axioms of a projective plane. This can be seen systematically using a construction known as the magic square, due to Hans Freudenthal and Jacques Tits (Landsberg & Manivel 2001).

E8 root system

Some model of the E8 root system, projected into three-space, and represented by the vertices of the 421 polytope,

Shown in 3D projection using the basis vectors $[u,v,w]$ giving H3 symmetry:

$$u = (1, \phi, 0, -1, \phi, 0, 0, 0)$$

$$v = (\phi, 0, 1, \phi, 0, -1, 0, 0)$$

$$w = (0, 1, \phi, 0, -1, \phi, 0, 0)$$

The projected 421 polytope vertices are sorted and tallied by their 3D norm generating the increasingly transparent hulls of each set of tallied norms. These show:

4 points at the origin

2 icosahedrons

2 dodecahedrons

4 icosahedrons

1 icosidodecahedron

2 dodecahedrons

2 icosahedrons

1 icosidodecahedron

for 240 vertices. These are two concentric sets of hulls from the H4 symmetry of the 600-cell scaled by the golden ratio.[2]

A root system of rank r is a particular finite configuration of vectors, called roots, which span an r -dimensional Euclidean space and satisfy certain geometrical properties. In particular, the root system must be invariant under reflection through the hyperplane perpendicular to any root.

The E8 root system is a rank 8 root system containing 240 root vectors spanning R^8 . It is irreducible in the sense that it cannot be built from root systems of smaller rank. All the root vectors in E8 have the same length. It is convenient for a number of purposes to normalize them to have length $\sqrt{2}$. These 240 vectors are the vertices of a semi-regular polytope discovered by Thorold Gosset in 1900, sometimes known as the 421 polytope.

Construction

In the so-called even coordinate system, E8 is given as the set of all vectors in R^8 with length squared equal to 2 such that coordinates are either all integers or all half-integers and the sum of the coordinates is even.

Explicitly, there are 112 roots with integer entries obtained from

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$\{\displaystyle \left(\pm 1,\pm 1,0,0,0,0,0,0\right)\},$

by taking an arbitrary combination of signs and an arbitrary permutation of coordinates,
and 128 roots with half-integer entries obtained from

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E8 2d projection with thread made by hand

The 112 roots with integer entries form a D8 root system. The E8 root system also contains a copy of A8 (which has 72 roots) as well as E6 and E7 (in fact, the latter two are usually defined as subsets of E8).

In the odd coordinate system, E8 is given by taking the roots in the even coordinate system and changing the sign of any one coordinate. The roots with integer entries are the same while those with half-integer entries have an odd number of minus signs rather than an even number.

Dynkin diagram

The Dynkin diagram for E8 is given by .

This diagram gives a concise visual summary of the root structure. Each node of this diagram represents a simple root. A line joining two simple roots indicates that they are at an angle of 120° to each other. Two simple roots that are not joined by a line are orthogonal.

Cartan matrix

The Cartan matrix of a rank r root system is an $r \times r$ matrix whose entries are derived from the simple roots. Specifically, the entries of the Cartan matrix are given by

$$A_{ij} = 2(\alpha_i, \alpha_j)$$

$$A_{ij} = 2 \frac{(\alpha_i, \alpha_j)}{(\alpha_i, \alpha_i)}$$

where $(\cdot, \cdot)$ is the Euclidean inner product and α_i are the simple roots. The entries are independent of the choice of simple roots (up to ordering).

The Cartan matrix for E_8 is given by

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ -1 & 2 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 2 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 & 2 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 2 & -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 2 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 2 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$$

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$$\begin{bmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ -1 & 2 \\ -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \\ 1 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

■

$$\left[\begin{array}{rr} 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array} \right].$$

With this numbering of nodes in the Dynkin diagram, the highest root in the root system has Coxeter labels (2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 4, 2, 3). Using this representation of the simple roots, the lowest root is given by

[

1

0

0

0

0

0

0

1

]

•

$$\left[\begin{array}{rr} -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{array}\right].$$

The only simple root that can be added to the lowest root to obtain another root is the one corresponding to node 1 in this labeling of the Dynkin diagram — as is to be expected from the affine Dynkin diagram for

E

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$\{\mathrm{\tilde{E}}_8\}$. The Hasse diagram to the right enumerates the 120 roots of positive height relative to any particular choice of simple roots consistent with this node numbering.

Note that the Hasse diagram does not represent the full Lie algebra, or even the full root system. The 120 roots of negative height relative to the same set of simple roots can be adequately represented by a second copy of the Hasse diagram with the arrows reversed; but it is less straightforward to connect these two diagrams via a basis for the eight-dimensional Cartan subalgebra. In the notation of the exposition of Chevalley generators and Serre relations: Insofar as an arrow represents the Lie bracket by the generator

e

i

e_i associated with a simple root, each root in the height -1 layer of the reversed Hasse diagram must correspond to some

f

i

f_i and can have only one upward arrow, connected to a node in the height 0 layer representing the element of the Cartan subalgebra given by

h

i

=

[

e

i

,

f

i

]

$h_i = [e_i, f_i]$. But the upward arrows from the height 0 layer must then represent

[

e

i

,

h

j

]

=

-

a

j

$$[e_i, h_j] = -a_{ji} e_i$$
 where a_{ji} is (the transpose of) the Cartan matrix. One could draw multiple upward arrows from each h_j associated with all e_i for which $[e_i, h_j]$ is nonzero; but this neither captures the numerical entries in the Cartan matrix nor reflects the fact that each e_i only has nonzero Lie bracket with one degree of freedom in the Cartan subalgebra (just not the same degree of freedom as h_i).

More fundamentally, this organization implies that the span of the generators designated as "the" Cartan subalgebra is somehow inherently special, when in most applications, any mutually commuting set of eight of the 248 Lie algebra generators (of which there are many!) — or any eight linearly independent, mutually commuting Lie derivations on any manifold with E8 structure — would have served just as well. Once a Cartan subalgebra has been selected (or defined a priori, as in the case of a lattice), a basis of "Cartan generators" (the h_i among the Chevalley generators) and a root system are a useful way to describe structure relative to this subalgebra. But the root system map is not the Lie algebra (let alone group!) territory. Given a set of Chevalley generators, most degrees of freedom in a Lie algebra and their sparse Lie brackets with

e
i

$\{e_i\}$ can be represented schematically as circles and arrows, but this simply breaks down on the chosen Cartan subalgebra. Such are the hazards of schematic visual representations of mathematical structures.

Weyl group

The Weyl group of E8 is of order 696729600, and can be described as $O_+^{8(2)}$: it is of the form 2.G.2 (that is, a stem extension by the cyclic group of order 2 of an extension of the cyclic group of order 2 by a group G) where G is the unique simple group of order 174182400 (which can be described as $PS\Omega_8^+(2)$).[3]

E8 root lattice

Main article: E8 lattice

The integral span of the E8 root system forms a lattice in R^8 naturally called the E8 root lattice. This lattice is rather remarkable in that it is the only (nontrivial) even, unimodular lattice with rank less than 16.

Simple subalgebras of E8

An incomplete simple subgroup tree of E8

The Lie algebra E8 contains as subalgebras all the exceptional Lie algebras as well as many other important Lie algebras in mathematics and physics. The height of the Lie algebra on the diagram approximately corresponds to the rank of the algebra. A line from an algebra down to a lower algebra indicates that the lower algebra is a subalgebra of the higher algebra.

Chevalley groups of type E8

Chevalley (1955) showed that the points of the (split) algebraic group E8 (see above) over a finite field with q elements form a finite Chevalley group, generally written $E_8(q)$, which is simple for any q,[4][5] and constitutes one of the infinite families addressed by the classification of finite simple groups. Its number of elements is given by the formula (sequence A008868 in the OEIS):

$$\frac{q^{120} - 1}{(q^{30} - 1)(q^{24} - 1)}$$

—
1
)
(
q
20

—
1
)
(
q
18

—
1
)
(
q
14

—
1
)
(
q
12

—
1
)
(
q
8

—
1
)
(
q
2

—
1
)
{\displaystyle q^{\{120\}}\left(q^{\{30\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{24\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{20\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{18\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{14\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{12\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{8\}}-1\right)\left(q^{\{2\}}-1\right)}

The first term in this sequence, the order of E8(2), namely
3378047531436348062613881906140855950799916922424676515761609599090688
00000 $\approx 3.38 \times 10^{74}$, is already larger than the size of the Monster group. This group

$E_8(2)$ is the last one described (but without its character table) in the ATLAS of Finite Groups.[6]

The Schur multiplier of $E_8(q)$ is trivial, and its outer automorphism group is that of field automorphisms (i.e., cyclic of order f if $q = p^f$, where p is prime).

Lusztig (1979) described the unipotent representations of finite groups of type E_8 .

Subgroups, subalgebras, and extensions

The smaller exceptional groups E_7 and E_6 sit inside E_8 . In the compact group, both $E_6 \times SU(3)/(Z/3Z)$ and $E_7 \times SU(2)/(+1, -1)$ are maximal subgroups of E_8 .

Embeddings of the maximal subgroups of E_8 up to dimension 248 with associated projection matrix.

The 248-dimensional adjoint representation of E_8 may be considered in terms of its restricted representation to the first of these subgroups. It transforms under $E_6 \times SU(3)$ as a sum of tensor product representations, which may be labelled as a pair of dimensions as $(78, 1) + (1, 8) + (27, 3) + (27, 3)$. (Since the maximal subgroup is actually the quotient of this group product by a finite group, these notations may strictly be taken as indicating the infinitesimal (Lie algebra) representations.) Since the adjoint representation can be described by the roots together with the generators in the Cartan subalgebra, we may choose a particular E_6 root system within E_8 and decompose the sum representation relative to this E_6 . In this description,

$(78, 1)$, a copy of

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_6\}$, consists of the 72 roots with $(-1/2, -1/2, -1/2)$, $(0, 0, 0)$, or $(1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$ in the last three dimensions, together with five Cartan generators corresponding to the first five dimensions and one Cartan generator corresponding to an equally weighted sum of the last three Cartan generators of the E_8 system;

$(1, 8)$, a copy of

s

u

$($

3

$)$

$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{su}\}_3\}$, consists of the six roots with permutations of $(0, 1, -1)$ in the last three dimensions, together with two Cartan generators corresponding to the two trace-free combinations of the last three Cartan generators of the E_8 system;

$(27, 3)$ consists of all roots with permutations of $(-1, 0, 0)$, $(-1/2, 1/2, 1/2)$, or $(0, 1, 1)$ in the last three dimensions; and

$(27, 3)$ consists of all roots with permutations of $(1, 0, 0)$, $(1/2, -1/2, -1/2)$, or $(0, -1, -1)$ in the last three dimensions.

The 248-dimensional adjoint representation of E_8 , when similarly restricted to the second maximal subgroup, transforms under $E_7 \times SU(2)$ as: $(133,1) + (1,3) + (56,2)$. We may again see the decomposition by looking at the roots together with the generators in the Cartan subalgebra. In this description,

$(133,1)$, a copy of

e_7

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_7\}$, consists of the 126 roots with $(-1,-1)$, $(-1/2,-1/2)$, $(0,0)$, $(1/2,1/2)$, or $(1,1)$ in the last two dimensions, together with six Cartan generators corresponding to the first six dimensions and one Cartan generator corresponding to an equally weighted sum of the last two Cartan generators of the E_8 system;

$(1,3)$, a copy of

$s_u(2)$

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{su}\}(2)\}$, consists of the two roots $(0,0,0,0,0,0,1,-1)$, $(0,0,0,0,0,0,-1,1)$, together with one Cartan generator corresponding to the trace-free combination of the last two Cartan generators of the E_8 system; and $(56,2)$ consists of all roots with permutations of $(0,-1)$, $(1/2,-1/2)$, or $(1,0)$ in the last two dimensions.

The connection between these two descriptions is given by the graded exceptional Lie algebra constructions of J. Tits and B. N. Allison. Any 27-dimensional representation of E_6 can be equipped with a non-associative (but strictly power-associative) Jordan product operation to form an Albert algebra (an important exceptional case in algebraic constructions). The Kantor–Koecher–Tits construction applied to this Albert algebra recovers the 78-dimensional

e_6

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_6\}$ as the reduced structure algebra of the Albert algebra. This

e_6

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_6\}$, together with the 27 and 27 representations and the grade operator (the element of the Cartan subalgebra with weight -1 on the 27, +1 on the 27, and 0 on the 78), forms an

e_7

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_7\}$ 3-graded Lie algebra. A complete exposition of this construction may be found in standard texts on Jordan algebras such as Jacobson 1968 or McCrimmon 2004.

Starting this 3-graded Lie algebra construction with any particular 27-dimensional

representation, embedded within

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{8}\}$, of any particular E6 subgroup of E8 produces the corresponding

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{7}\}$ subalgebra. The particular

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{7}\}$ in the $E_7 \times SU(2)$ decomposition given above corresponds to choosing the 27 consisting of all roots with $(1,0,0)$, $(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$, or $(0, -1, -1)$ in the last three dimensions (in order), with the grade operator having weight $(-1, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$ in these dimensions; or equivalently to choosing the "27" consisting of all roots with $(-1, 0, 0)$, $(-\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2})$, or $(0, 1, 1)$ in the last three dimensions (in order), with the grade operator having weight $(1, -\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{1}{2})$ in these dimensions. Note that there is nothing special about this choice of dimensions — the

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$\{\displaystyle \mathbb{R}^8\}$ within which the root system is embedded is not the set of eight independent but non-orthogonal axes corresponding to the simple roots, and any three dimensions will do — and there are also constructions using other equivalent groupings of roots. What matters is that the kernel of the Lie bracket with the generator chosen as the "grade operator" be an

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$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{6}\}$ subalgebra (plus a central

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$\{\displaystyle \mathbb{R}^2\}$ associated with the grade operator itself and the remaining generator of the Cartan subalgebra), not

a

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$\oplus$

R

2

$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{a}\}_{6} \oplus \mathbb{R}^2\}$,

a

7

$\oplus$

R

$\{\displaystyle \{\mathfrak{a}\}_{7} \oplus \mathbb{R}\}$,

e

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$\oplus$

R

$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{7}\oplus \mathbb{R}\}$ }, etc.

(In the simple Lie algebra case, the sign of the grade of the 27 versus the 27 representation is a matter of convention, as is the scale of the grading. However, choosing -1 as the grade of the 27-dimensional "vector" representation is consistent with an extension of the 3-graded algebra to higher positive grades via the exterior algebra over the 27 "covector" representation. The "vector" representation then lies, not in this nonnegative-graded exterior algebra, but in the graded algebra of derivations over the exterior algebra; the 78-dimensional

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{6}\}$ is the grade 0 subalgebra (a subalgebra of the inner derivations by "vector-valued 1-forms") of this graded algebra of derivations. For details on how this asymmetric structure works starting from a general 3-graded algebra, see references at Frölicher–Nijenhuis bracket. The relevance of this observation to E8 is simply that E7 and E8 are their own clusters of structures, distinguished as exceptional simple Lie groups/algebras, and that any particular reconstruction of them using representations of their subgroups/subalgebras will have extensions beyond the motivating case. Varying conventions of sign, scale, and conjugate relationship in the literature are due not just to inaccuracies but also to the directions in which the authors seek to extend their constructions.)

The distinguished

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{su}\}}(2)\}$ in the $E7 \times SU(2)$ decomposition above is then given by the subalgebra of

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{su}\}}(3)\}$ that commutes with the grade operator (which lies in the Cartan subalgebra of this

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{su}\}}(3)\}$). Of the four remaining roots in the

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$\{\mathrm{su}\}_{(3)}$, two are of grade $\frac{1}{2}$ and two are of grade $-\frac{1}{2}$. In the convention where the 27 of E6 used to construct the

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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{7}$ has grade -1 and the 27 has grade +1, the other two 27's have grade $+\frac{1}{2}$ and the other two 27's have grade $-\frac{1}{2}$, as is apparent from permuting the values of the last three roots in the description above. Grouping these $4 \times (1+27) = 112$ generators to form the grade $+\frac{1}{2}$ and $-\frac{1}{2}$ subspaces of

e
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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{8}$ (relative to the original choice of grade operator within

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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{7}$), each subspace may be given a quite particular non-associative (nor even power-associative) product operation, resulting in two copies of Brown's 56-dimensional structurable algebra. Allison's 5-graded Lie algebra construction based on this structurable algebra recovers the original

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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{8}$. (Allison's 5-grading differs from the above by a factor -2.) Grouping these generators differently, based on their weights relative to the Cartan generator of the

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$\{\mathrm{su}\}_{(2)}$ orthogonal to

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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{7}$, gives two 56-dimensional subspaces that each carry the lowest-dimensional non-trivial irreducible representation of E7. Either of these may be combined with the Cartan generator to form a 57-dimensional Heisenberg algebra, and adjoining this to

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$\{\mathrm{e}\}_{7}$ produces the (non-simple) Lie algebra $E_{7\frac{1}{2}}$ described by Landsberg and Manivel.

From the perspective in which the 27-dimensional grade -1 subspace of

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{8}\}$ (relative to a choice of grade operator) plays the role of "vector" representation of E_6 and the 27 with roots opposite it plays the role of "covector" representation, it is natural to look for "spinor" representations in the grade $+1/2$ and $-1/2$ subspaces, or in some other combination of the $(27,3)$ and $(\bar{27},3)$ representations of $E_6 \times SU(3)$, and to attempt to relate these to geometrical spinors in the Clifford algebra sense as employed in quantum field theory. Variations on this idea are common in the physics literature. See Distler and Garibaldi 2009 for discussion of the mathematical obstacles to constructing a chiral gauge theory based on E_8 . The structure of

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{8}\}$ relative to its

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$\{\mathrm{displaystyle \{\mathfrak{e}\}_{6}\}$ subalgebra, together with the conventional scaling of elements of the Cartan subalgebra, invites extensions by geometric analogy but does not necessarily imply a relationship to low-dimensional geometry or low-energy physics. The same may be said of connections to Jordan and Heisenberg algebras, whose historical origins are intertwined with the development of quantum mechanics. Not every visual representation evocative of a tobacco pipe will hold tobacco.

The finite quasisimple groups that can embed in (the compact form of) E_8 were found by Griess & Ryba (1999).

The Demphwolff group is a subgroup of (the compact form of) E_8 . It is contained in the Thompson sporadic group, which acts on the underlying vector space of the Lie group E_8 but does not preserve the Lie bracket. The Thompson group fixes a lattice and does preserve the Lie bracket of this lattice mod 3, giving an embedding of the Thompson group into $E_8(F_3)$.

The embeddings of the maximal subgroups of E_8 up to dimension 248 are shown to the right.

Applications

The E_8 Lie group has applications in theoretical physics and especially in string theory and supergravity. $E_8 \times E_8$ is the gauge group of one of the two types of heterotic string and is one of two anomaly-free gauge groups that can be coupled to the $N = 1$ supergravity in ten dimensions. E_8 is the U-duality group of supergravity on an eight-torus (in its split form).

One way to incorporate the Standard Model of particle physics into heterotic string theory is the symmetry breaking of E_8 to its maximal subalgebra $SU(3) \times E_6$.

In 1982, Michael Freedman used the E_8 lattice to construct an example of a topological

4-manifold, the E8 manifold, which has no smooth structure.

Antony Garrett Lisi's incomplete "An Exceptionally Simple Theory of Everything" attempts to describe all known fundamental interactions in physics as part of the E8 Lie algebra.[7][8]

R. Coldea, D. A. Tennant, and E. M. Wheeler et al. (2010) reported an experiment where the electron spins of a cobalt-niobium crystal exhibited, under certain conditions, two of the eight peaks related to E8 that were predicted by Zamolodchikov (1989).[9][10]

History

Wilhelm Killing (1888a, 1888b, 1889, 1890) discovered the complex Lie algebra E8 during his classification of simple compact Lie algebras, though he did not prove its existence, which was first shown by Élie Cartan. Cartan determined that a complex simple Lie algebra of type E8 admits three real forms. Each of them gives rise to a simple Lie group of dimension 248, exactly one of which (as for any complex simple Lie algebra) is compact. Chevalley (1955) introduced algebraic groups and Lie algebras of type E8 over other fields: for example, in the case of finite fields they lead to an infinite family of finite simple groups of Lie type. E8 continues to be an area of active basic research by Atlas of Lie Groups and Representations, which aims to determine the unitary representations of all the Lie groups.[11]

See also

En

Footnotes

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External links

Lusztig–Vogan polynomial calculation

Atlas of Lie groups

Kazhdan–Lusztig–Vogan Polynomials for E8

Narrative of the Project to compute Kazhdan–Lusztig Polynomials for E8

American Institute of Mathematics (March 2007), Mathematicians Map E8

The n-Category Café, a University of Texas blog posting by John Baez on E8.

Other links

Graphic representation of E8 root system.

The list of dimensions of irreducible representations of the complex form of E8 is sequence A121732 in the OEIS.

vte

Exceptional Lie groups

vte

String theory

Categories: E8 (mathematics)Exceptional Lie algebrasLie groups

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Seasonal Holidays 2025

Abjad System

AI Mode

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AI Overview

An abjad system is a writing system, originating from ancient Semitic scripts like Phoenician and Aramaic, that primarily uses consonants, with vowels often omitted or indicated by diacritics, and assigns numerical values to these letters, turning text into numbers for various purposes like chronology (chronograms), mysticism, and cataloging in Islamic manuscripts and scientific instruments. The term comes from the first four letters (Alif, Ba, Jim, Dal) of the traditional Arabic alphabet order.

Key Characteristics

Consonants Only (Mostly): Abjads focus on consonants, a simpler system than full alphabets (which have separate vowel signs) or syllabaries (which have signs for syllables).

Numerical Values: Each consonant has a specific numerical value (e.g., Alif=1, Ba=2, Jim=3, Dal=4 in Arabic).

Origin: The Phoenician alphabet (c. 1200 BCE) is considered the earliest known abjad, spreading widely due to trade.

Evolution: Arabic and Hebrew scripts are well-known modern examples of abjads, evolving from these early systems.

Common Uses & Examples

Chronograms: Poets use abjad values to form words whose total numerical value equals a specific year, often for elegies or historical markers.

Mysticism & Esotericism: The system is used in Islamic traditions (like Sufism) for numerological interpretations (gematria or ilm al-huruf).

Bookkeeping: Used for numbering pages, chapters, or quires in older manuscripts and printed books.

Scientific Instruments: Found on historical astrolabes and other astronomical tools for numbering scales.

How it Works (Example: Arabic Abjad)

Letters are grouped by value:

1-9: (9) ط, (8) ح, (7) ز, (6) و, (5) ه, (4) د, (3) ج, (2) ب, (1) ا

10-90: (90) ص, (80) ف, (70) ع, (60) س, (50) ن, (40) م, (30) ل, (20) ك

100-1000: (1000) ق, (900) ر, (800) ش, (700) ذ, (600) خ, (500) ث, (400) ت, (300) س, (200) ر, (100) ق

Calculation: To get larger numbers, you add the values of letters together (e.g., 45 = م (40) + ه (5)).

Abjad Table - MELA ConC

The abjad system is a numbering system that uses the letters of the Arabic alphabet with numerical values. The term comes from the...

Middle East Librarians Association

Overview of the Abjad numerological system - Bahá'í Library Online

The older letter/numbers gradually fell out of use, except in certain contexts (specifically the use of Roman numerals and Abjad n...

Bahá'í Library Online

Abjad Alphabet: Letters & Numerals - Study.com

Aramaic. Aramaic is a dead language that used an abjad alphabet. Aramaic borrowed many of its phrases and alphabet structure from ...

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Show more

Abjad numerals

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abjad_numerals

The Abjad numerals, also called Hisab al-Jummal are a decimal alphabetic numeral system/alphanumeric code, in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet ...

Abjad order

Uses of the Abjad system

Letter values

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Arabic alphabet

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز س ش ص ض ط ظ ع غ ف ق ك ل م ن ه و ي

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The Abjad numerals, also called Hisab al-Jummal (Arabic: **حِسَابُ الْجُمَّلِ**, ḥisāb al-jummal),

are a decimal alphabetic numeral system/alphanumeric code, in which the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet are assigned numerical values. They have been used in the Arabic-speaking world since before the eighth century when positional Arabic numerals were adopted.[1] In modern Arabic, the word 'abjadīyah (أَبْجَدِيَّة) means 'alphabet' in general.

In the Abjad system, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, 'alif, is used to represent 1; the second letter, bā', 2, up to 9. Letters then represent the first nine intervals of 10s and those of the 100s: yā' for 10, kāf for 20, qāf for 100, ending with 1000.

The word 'abjad (أَبْجَد) itself derives from the first four letters (A-B-G-D) of the Semitic alphabet, including the Aramaic alphabet, Hebrew alphabet, Phoenician alphabet, and other scripts for Semitic languages. These alphabets contained only 22 letters, stopping at taw, numerically equivalent to 400. The Arabic Abjad system continues at this point with letters not found in other alphabets: thā' = 500, khā' = 600, dhāl = 700, etc. Abjad numerals in Arabic are similar to the alphanumeric codes of Hebrew gematria and Greek isopsephy.

Abjad order

The Abjad order of the Arabic alphabet has two slightly different variants. The Arabic abjad order is not a simple historical continuation of the earlier north Semitic alphabetic order, since it has a position corresponding to the Aramaic letter samekh / semkat 𐤌, yet no letter of the Arabic alphabet historically derives from that letter.

In the most common Mashriqi abjad sequence, loss of samekh was compensated for by the split of shin 𐤃 into two independent Arabic letters, ش (shīn) and س (sīn), which moved up to take the place of samekh.

The Mashriqi (common) abjad sequence, read from right to left, is:

ع	ف	ص	ق	ر	ش	ت	ث	خ	ذ	ض	ظ	غ
د	هـ	و	ز	ح	ط	ي	ك	ل	م	ن	س	
									ا	ب	ج	
'	f	ṣ	q	r	sh	t	th	kh	dh	ḍ	ẓ	gh
d	h	w/u	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	l	m	n	s	
										b	j	

This is commonly vocalized as follows:

'abjad hawwaz ḥuṭṭī kalamān sa'faṣ qarashat thakhadh ḍaḏagh.

Another vocalization is:

'abujadin hawazin ḥuṭiya kalman sa'faṣ qurishat thakhudh ḍaḏugh

In the Maghrebian abjad sequence (quoted in apparently earliest authorities and considered older[2]), loss of samekh was compensated for by the split of tsade 𐤛 into two independent Arabic letters, ض (ḍad) and ص (ṣad), which moved up to take the

place of samekh.

The Maghrebian abjad sequence, read from right to left, is:[2][3][unreliable source?]

[illegible]

which can be vocalized as:

'abujadin hawazin ḥutiya kalman ṣa'faḍ qurisat thakhudh zaghash

Another vocalization is:

'abajd hawazin ḥuṭīyin kalamnin ṣa'faḍin qurīsat thakḥudh zuḡshshin

Competing order

Modern dictionaries and other reference books use the newer hijāʾī (هجائي) / alifbāʾī (ألفبائي) and more common order, which partially groups letters together by similarity of shape, and is never used as numerals.

The common hijā'ī sequence, read from right to left, is:

[illegible]

Persian uses a slightly different order, in which **g** comes before **o** instead of after it.

In the Maghrebīan *hiġāʿī* / *alifbāʿī* order (replaced by the Mashriqī order[3][unreliable source?]), the sequence is:[2]

ي	و	ه	ش	س	ق	ف	غ	ع	ض	ص	ن	م
	ل	ك	ظ	ط	ز	ر	ذ	د	خ	ح	ج	ث
	ت	ب	ا									
y	w/u	h	sh	s	q	f	gh	‘	ḍ	ṣ	n	m
	l	k	ẓ	ṭ	z	r	dh	d	kh	ḥ	j	th
	t	b	‘									

In Abu Muhammad al-Hasan al-Hamdani's encyclopædia *Kitāb al-Iklīl min akhbār al-Yaman wa-ansāb Ḥimyar* (كتاب الإكليل من أخبار اليمن وأنساب حمير), the letter sequence (from right to left) is:[4]

ي	ش	س	ه	ز	ر	ق	ف	ط	ط	غ	ع	ض
	ص	ن	و	م	ل	ك	ذ	د	خ	ح	ج	ث
	ت	ب	ا									
y	sh	s	h	z	r	q	f	ṭ	ṭ	gh	‘	ḍ
	ṣ	n	w/u	m	l	k	dh	d	kh	ḥ	j	th
	t	b	’									

Uses of the Abjad system

Before the Hindu–Arabic numeral system, the abjad as numbers were used for all mathematical purposes. In modern Arabic, they are primarily used for numbering outlines, items in lists, and points of information. Equivalent to English, "A.", "B.", and "C." (or, rarer, Roman numerals: I, II, III, IV), in Arabic, thus "أ", then "ب", then "ج", not the first three letters of the modern hijā’ī order.

Like Roman numerals, there is no representation of zero and there are no fractions. By convention, the numbers are written largest first (larger to smaller, going right to left). Reversing the order indicates multiplication, so for example **بغ** is 2000 while **غب** is 1002. (Contrast this with Roman numerals, where reversing the order indicates subtraction, e.g. IV = 5 - 1 = 4.)

The abjad numbers are also used to assign numerical values to Arabic words for purposes of numerology. The common Islamic phrase **بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم** bismillāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm ('In the name of Allah, the most merciful, the most compassionate' – see Basmala) has a numeric value of 786 (from a letter-by-letter cumulative value of 2+60+40+1+30+30+5+1+30+200+8+40+50+1+30+200+8+10+40). The name Allāh **الله** by itself has the value 66 (1+30+30+5).

Letter values

In common abjad order:[2]

Notice that some letters appear in their initial form and others in a riqaa-like form, with the alif having a different shape.

Value Letter Name Trans-literation

1		’alif	’ / ā
2	ب	bā’	b
3	ج	jīm	j
4	د	dāl	d
5	ه	hā’	h
6	و	wāw	w / ū
7	ز	zāy/zayn	z
8	ح	ḥā’	ḥ

9 ط ṭā' ṭ

Value Letter Name Trans-
literation

10	ي	yā'	y / ī
20	ك	kāf	k
30	ل	lām	l
40	م	mīm	m
50	ن	nūn	n
60	س	sīn	s
70	ع	'ayn	'
80	ف	fā'	f
90	ص	ṣād	ṣ

Value Letter Name Trans-
literation

100	ق	qāf	q
200	ر	rā'	r
300	ش	shīn	sh
400	ت	tā'	t
500	ث	thā'	th
600	خ	khā'	kh
700	ذ	dhāl	dh
800	ض	ḍād	ḍ
900	ظ	ẓā'	ẓ
1000	غ	ghayn	gh

In Maghrebian Abjad order:[2]

Value Letter Name Trans-
literation

1		'alif	' / ā
2	ب	bā'	b
3	ج	jīm	j
4	د	dāl	d
5	ه	hā'	h
6	و	wāw	w / ū
7	ز	zāy/zayn	z
8	ح	ḥā'	ḥ
9	ط	ṭā'	ṭ

Value Letter Name Trans-

literation

10	ی	yā'	y / ī
20	ک	kāf	k
30	ل	lām	l
40	م	mīm	m
50	ن	nūn	n
60	ص	ṣād	ṣ
70	ع	'ayn	'
80	ف	fā'	f
90	ض	ḍād	ḍ

Value Letter Name Trans-
literation

100	ق	qāf	q
200	ر	rā'	r
300	س	sīn	s
400	ت	tā'	t
500	ث	thā'	th
600	خ	khā'	kh
700	ذ	dhāl	dh
800	ظ	ẓā'	ẓ
900	غ	ghayn	gh
1000	ش	shīn	sh

For four Persian letters these values are used:

Value Letter Name Trans-
literation Has numerical
value of

2	پ	pe	p	ب
3	چ	che	ch or č	ج
7	ژ	zhe	zh or ž	ز
20	گ	gâf	g	ک

Similar systems

The Abjad numerals are equivalent to the earlier Hebrew numerals up to 400. The Hebrew numeral system is known as Gematria and is used in Kabbalistic texts and numerology. Like the Abjad order, it is used in modern times for numbering outlines and points of information, including the first six days of the week. The Greek numerals differ in a number of ways from the Abjad ones (for instance in the Greek alphabet there is no equivalent for ص, ṣād). The Greek language system of letters-as-numbers is called isopsephy. In modern times the old 27-letter alphabet of this system also continues to be used for numbering lists.

See also

Eastern Arabic numerals

Western Arabic numerals

Kufic

Hurufism

'Ilm al-Huruf (science of letters)

Gematria

Isopsephy

Katapayadi system

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External links

Look up abjad in Wiktionary, the free dictionary.

Overview of the abjad numerological system

Sufi numerology site Archived 2012-04-21 at the Wayback Machine

Numerical Value of an Arabic Text as per "Abjad" Calculation - www.alavibohra.org Archived 2011-07-05 at the Wayback Machine

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Front Cover

Hafez Saifullah Mansur

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About the author (2025)

Hafez Saifullah Mansur Abir is a divinely chosen guide, uniquely gifted with the ability to communicate directly with angels (Fereshta), invoking their presence to perform Ruqyah (Islamic healing) and alleviate afflictions caused by unseen forces. A revered Islamic scholar from Bangladesh, his sacred abilities have transformed countless lives, offering relief to those suffering from spiritual distress, negative energies, and unexplained hardships. Unlike many spiritual scholars, his knowledge bridges both mystical and scientific realms, making him a rare beacon of wisdom in an age of uncertainty.

As the CEO of tilismati-duniya.com and the visionary behind the Tilismati Duniya YouTube channel, Hafez Saifullah Mansur Abir has dedicated his life to unveiling the hidden truths of the universe. His expertise in esoteric sciences, astrology, and spiritual enlightenment empowers seekers to awaken their inner potential, understand their destiny, and harness the unseen forces shaping their lives. Beyond spirituality, he is also a bright medical student, blending divine wisdom with modern science to offer a holistic approach to healing—a rare fusion that sets him apart as both a mystic and a scholar of the human body and mind.

Beyond his scholarly pursuits, he is a devoted humanitarian committed to uplifting the underprivileged. He runs an orphanage, providing shelter, education, and care to orphaned and impoverished children, ensuring they have a future filled with hope and opportunity. Through his philanthropic work, he has touched countless lives, offering guidance, wisdom, and material support to those in need.

A national treasure of Bangladesh, Hafez Saifullah Mansur Abir stands as a pillar of spiritual wisdom, healing, and transformation. For those seeking truth, divine healing, and a deeper connection to the mysteries of existence, he offers more than just knowledge—he unveils a path to higher consciousness, unlocking the secrets of the soul and the infinite possibilities beyond the material world.

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AI Overview

Persian occult science, known as ‘ulūm-i gharība (wondrous/strange sciences), encompasses a rich tradition of metaphysics, divination (astrology, geomancy), alchemy, talismanic magic, and spiritism, deeply interwoven with Islamic esotericism and modern Iranian intellectual history. These practices, rooted in figures like Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and medieval texts, aim to systematically understand and manipulate the immaterial world, influencing everything from popular folklore to major religious movements, and often blending with imported European esoteric ideas.

Core Concepts & Disciplines

‘Ulūm-i Gharība (Strange/Wondrous Sciences): The common term for occult practices, focusing on wonder and the paranormal.

**** Metaphysics:**** Engaging with spirits, jinn, and the afterlife to solve worldly problems.

**** Divination:**** Astrology, geomancy (earth divination), and palmistry.

Alchemy (Kīmiyā): Transmutation of substances, often linked with spiritual purification.

Talismanic Magic (Līmiyā): Creating objects imbued with spiritual power, often using letters and numbers.

Illusionism/Conjuring (Sīmiyā): Practices involving performance and manipulation of perception.

Historical & Cultural Significance

Shi'i Islam: Key Shi'i figures, like Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, are central to the development of these sciences, with esoteric books like the Jafr containing hidden knowledge.

**** Medieval & Early Modern Period:**** Texts like Asrār-i qāsimī by Husayn Vā'iz Kāshifī compiled knowledge on various occult arts, becoming foundational.

Modern Iran: These sciences weren't suppressed by modern rationalism but adapted, influencing intellectuals, religious figures (even Ayatollah Khomeini), and popular spirituality, leading to a unique blend of traditional metaphysics and modern scientific inquiry.

Key Figures & Texts

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq: Purported founder of Islamic occult sciences, possessing knowledge from ancient texts.

Husayn Vā'iz Kāshifī: Author of *Asrār-i qāsimī*, a significant manual on illusionism and talismans.

Picatrix (*Ghāyat al-ḥākīm*): A key text on magic, alchemy, and talismans, influential in the Islamicate world.

In essence, Persian occult science is a dynamic, centuries-old system of understanding the hidden world, evolving from ancient traditions to contemporary practices, and deeply shaping Iranian culture and thought.

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<http://sufisuplications.blogspot.com> › 2018/08 › scien...

Aug 6, 2018 — ‘ilm 'l-huruuf' (the science of letters), it is the science of the special qualities of each of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet,

“The Symbolism of Arabic Letters”

Sufi Path of Love

<https://sufipathoflove.com> › the-symbolism-of-arabic-le...

The Muslim Tradition recognizes the science of letters ('ilm al-huruf – علم الحروف), which is linked with the science of numbers ('ilm al-arqaam – علم الأرقام)

Ilm al-Huruf (عِلْمُ الْحُرُوف) (The Science of the Letters)

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The Arabic letters are not merely letters. They are primordial, the nothingness that was willed to be, they are before time, before space.

The Symbolism of Letters and Language

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society

<https://ibnarabisociety.org> › symbolism-of-letters-and-la...

The symbolism of letters and language in the work of Ibn Arabi. An article by Pierre Lory on the website of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society.

huruf Letters - The Language of the Future | Sufi Terminology

almirajsuficentre.org.au

<https://www.almirajsuficentre.org.au> › app › single

The term 'Ilm al Huruf (Science of the letters) is given to a complex science and symbolism which is based on the letters of the Arabic alphabet.

The Alphabetical Locus as the Nuqṭah (Point) within ...

Hurqalya Publications

<https://hurqalya.ucmerced.edu> › node

Oct 10, 2018 — In Arabic and Persian the subdot of the letter "B" is referred to as the nuqṭah, the "dot" or "point". It has been considered the locus of ...

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The Sufi interpretation of the letter Alif

The Sufi Tavern

<https://sufi-tavern.com> › sufi-symbols › the-sufi-interpr...

Feb 23, 2018 — Hakim Tirmidhi calls the science of letters ('ilm al-huruf) the science of the friends of God ('ilm al-awliya). Shaykh Ibn al-'Arabi gives ...

Abjad Table of Arabic Letters' Heavenly Values - Secrets of ...

nurmuhammad.com

<https://nurmuhammad.com> › Letters & Numbers

... and their Heavenly Values. Secrets of Muqatta'at. Ilm Huroof (Arranged in Powers of 9). 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. ا, ب, ج, د, هـ, و, ز, ح, ط.

What is the most potent Arabic black magic grimoire?

Medium · Mi Ainsel

1 year ago

‘Ilm akham an nugum: Astrology and related fields. ‘Ilm as-Simiya: Enchantments, the evil eye, and the ‘ilm-al-huruf fall into this category.

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Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm (Arabic Picatrix)

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AI Overview

Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm (غَايَةُ الْحَكِيم), known in the West as the Picatrix, is a foundational 10th-11th century Arabic grimoire of astrological and talismanic magic, compiled from numerous sources, explaining how to create talismans, summon spirits, and perform magical rites using celestial forces, heavily influencing Islamic and later European esotericism after its Latin translation.

Key Aspects

Meaning: "The Goal of the Wise" or "The Goal of the Sage".

Content: A comprehensive manual on astral magic, alchemy, and occult practices,

detailing how to create talismans, mix compounds, and determine astrological conditions.

Origin: Written in Arabic, likely in Andalusia (Islamic Spain), around the mid-10th to 11th century, drawing from older Hellenistic, Gnostic, and Iranian traditions.

Structure: Divided into four books, covering various aspects of magic, including prayers to stars, rituals, and philosophical underpinnings.

Influence: Translated into Latin in the 13th century, becoming a cornerstone of Western esotericism and medieval magic, studied by occultists and scholars alike.

Authorship: Authorship is debated, but often attributed to figures like Maslama al-Majriti or other Andalusian scholars, though the work itself remained anonymous, possibly due to the sensitive nature of occultism at the time.

Significance

It provides deep insights into medieval understandings of the cosmos, where celestial bodies directly influenced earthly events and human destiny.

It served as a vital link, transmitting ancient magical knowledge from the Islamic world to Renaissance Europe.

Picatrix (Ghayat al-Hakim): The World's Most Famous Book of ...

Nov 19, 2024 — in the history of magic and the occult sciences. there are few books that are as famous. and popular as the so-called.

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Picatrix - - Occult Encyclopedia

Aug 29, 2025 — Picatrix is the Latin name used today for a 400-page book of natural magic and astrology originally written in Arabic ...

- Occult Encyclopedia

Picatrix - Amazon.com

What's it about? "Picatrix" explores medieval astrological magic, offering insights into celestial forces and talismanic practices...

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Arabie, represents a major contribution the corpus of Hermetic ...

94 pages

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Wikipedia

[https://en.wikipedia.org › wiki › Picatrix](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picatrix)

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[https://www.renaissanceastrology.com › picatrix](https://www.renaissanceastrology.com/picatrix)

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The Picatrix - The Goal of the Wise (Arabic Edition)

Amazon.com

[https://www.amazon.com › Picatrix-Goal-Wise-Arabic](https://www.amazon.com/Picatrix-Goal-Wise-Arabic)

A circa 1200 AD Arabic grimoire on magic and astrology that influenced major Western occult thinkers like Marsilio Ficino, Dr John Dee, and Paracelsus.

30-day returns

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Picatrix - Grimoire Magic

booksofmagick.com

[https://booksofmagick.com › Grimoire Archives](https://booksofmagick.com/Grimoire-Archives)

Sep 2, 2020 — Picatrix is a manual for constructing talismans, mixing magical compounds, summoning planetary spirits, and determining astrological conditions.

Books 3 and 4 (Complete Picatrix Liber Atratus Edition)

Internet Archive

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Originally written sometime it was originally titled Ghayat al-Hakim, "The Goal of the Sage." and received the new title of Picatrix.

167 pages

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Picatrix : the Latin version of the Ghāyat al-ḥakīm / edited by David Pingree. In: Arabic

In: Latin Subjects: Magic Subjects: Astrology Subjects: Astronomy

Picatrix (E-Book)

Miskatonic University Press

<https://www.miskatonic-university-press.com> › product

Rooted in the 11th-century Arabic work “Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm,” the “Picatrix” encompasses an extensive range of esoteric topics – from astrological theory and ...

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Fragment of the Picatrix.

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The German Arabist Wilhelm Printz discovered the Arabic original of the Picatrix in around 1920, the title of which (Ghāyat al-Ḥakīm) has been translated as " ...

Picatrix-English-Vol-1-and-2.pdf

Krasi Ancient Astrology

<https://krasiancientastrology.com> › 2017/01 › Pica...

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^ "Shams al-Ma'arif (The Sun of Knowledge)". ^ Shams al-Ma'arif: Talismans and Magic Squares. Independently published. 2023. ISBN 979-8-8626-1047-5 . ^ Iqbal ...
Review — The Sun of Knowledge (Shams al-Ma'arif)

Medium · Dan Harms

3 years ago

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Let me introduce you all to one of the most intriguing—and controversial—books in Sufi history: Shams al-Ma'arif, or The Sun of Knowledge.

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d=c.length;if(d)for(google.c.b("dlt"),b=0;b<c.length;b++)a=c[b],a.complete||!a.src?
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width:280px}.bsmXxe{display:contents}.Gcxb4e .HZX55,.Gcxb4e .B2p7if{display:none}.
Gcxb4e:hover .HZX55,.Gcxb4e:hover .B2p7if{display:block}.wgbRNb{cursor:pointer;heig
ht:72px;position:absolute;display:block;visibility:inherit;width:36px;bottom:0;opacity:0.8;t
op:0;z-index:101}.wgbRNb.tHT0l{-webkit-transition:opacity 0.5s,visibility
0.5s}.wgbRNb:hover{opacity:0.9}.wgbRNb.pQXcHc,.wgbRNb.pQXcHc:hover{cursor:def
ault;opacity:0;visibility:hidden}.LJefwf{display:none}Filters and TopicsAI
ModeAllImagesVideosShoppingShort
videosNewsMoreForumsBooksWebMapsTools(function(){
(this||self).Wufxzb=function(c,e,f,l,k){var
d=document.getElementById(c);if(d&&(d.offsetWidth!==0||d.offsetHeight!==0))
{c=d.querySelector("div");var g=c.scrollWidth-c.offsetWidth,h=Math.min(e?
g:0,g);c.scrollLeft=e&&(l||f)?0:h;var a=d.getElementsByTagName("g-left-button")
[0],b=d.getElementsByTagName("g-right-button")[0];a&&b&&(e=RegExp("\\btHT0l\\
\\b"),f=RegExp("\\bpQXcHc\\
\\b"),a.className=a.className.replace(e,""),b.className=b.className.replace(e,""),h
===0?a.className="pQXcHc "+a.className:(a.className=
a.className.replace(f,""),k&&c.classList.add("pA30Ne")),h===g?
b.className="pQXcHc "+b.className:
(b.className=b.className.replace(f,""),k&&c.classList.add("FpCCub")),setTimeout(fun
ction(){a.className+=" tHT0l";b.className+=" tHT0l"},500)}}).call(this);(function(){var
id='_lp0_aYlQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_21';var rtl=false;var gecko=false;var edge=false;var
soh=true;
(this||self).Wufxzb(id,rtl,gecko,edge,soh);})();gTMtLb{z-
index:1101;position:absolute;top:-1000px}@keyframes pulse-animation {0%{opacity:1}
50%{animation-timing-function:cubic-bezier(0,0,1,1);opacity:0.5}100%{opacity:1}}Any
timeAny timePast hourPast 24 hoursPast weekPast monthPast yearCustom

range...Custom date rangeFromToGoAll resultsAll resultsVerbatimAdvanced
SearchAbout 4,810,000 results (0.31s) Ctrl+Shift+X to
select.WE0UJf:empty{display:none}.WE0UJf{min-height:12px;-webkit-transition:height
.22s ease-in-out}.M8Ogle{flex:0 auto;}.Pm5mre{max-
width:var(--center-width);}.M8Ogle h3{font-size:20px;line-
height:26px}.ZpdpPe:empty{padding-bottom:16px}Search Results(function(){var
src='https://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/conversion/16521530460/?
gad_source\x3d1\x26adview_type\x3d1\x26adview_query_id\x3dCKjYvtvuvpEDFZgq1A
EdnMMeCw';var sendAft=false;(function(){function a(){var c=src,b=new
Image;b.src=c;b.setAttribute("attributionsrc","")}sendAft&&google&&google.caft?
google.caft(function(){a()}:a());}.call(this);})();(function(){var
src='https://www.google.com/pagead/1p-conversion/16521530460/?
gad_source\x3d1\x26adview_type\x3d4\x26adview_query_id\x3dCKjYvtvuvpEDFZgq1A
EdnMMeCw';var sendAft=false;(function(){function a(){var c=src,b=new
Image;b.src=c;b.setAttribute("attributionsrc","")}sendAft&&google&&google.caft?
google.caft(function(){a()}:a());}.call(this);})();SIP8xc{text-transform:none}.VDgVie{text-
align:center}.sjVJQd{font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-size:14px;font-
weight:500;line-height:20px}.Pqkn2e{font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
size:16px;line-height:24px}.FR7ZSc{color:var(--
rrJJUc)}.FR7ZSc .niO4u{background:transparent;border-color:var(--
Yi4Nb)}.FR7ZSc: hover .niO4u::after{background:rgba(11,87,208,.08)}.FR7ZSc:active .ni
O4u::after{background:rgba(11,87,208,.24)}.NQYJvc .niO4u{padding:11px
15px}.NQYJvc .d3o3Ad{left:-6px}.NQYJvc .T2xY9b.T2xY9b{left:6px}body{--nvzc1:var(--
DEeStf);--nvzc2:var(--TSWZlb);--nvzc3:var(--BRLwE);--nvzc4:var(--xhUGwc);--
nvzc5:var(--XKMDxc);--nvzc6:var(--aYn2S);--nvzc7:var(--Lm570b);--nvzc8:var(--
KIZPne);--nvzc9:var(--jINu6c);--nvzc10:var(--uLz37c);--nvzc11:var(--YLNnHc);--
nvzc12:var(--IXoxUe);--nvzc13:var(--bbQxAb);--nvzc14:var(--TMYS9);--nvzc15:var(--
JKqx2);--nvzc16:var(--mXZkqc);--nvzc17:var(--gS5jXb);--nvzc18:var(--amnPwe);--
nvzc19:var(--Nsm0ce);--nvzc20:var(--rrJJUc);--nvzc21:var(--ZXiaGf);--nvzc22:var(--
EoKObe);--nvzc23:var(--clehld);--nvzc24:var(--ONhrGd);--nvzc25:var(--gVUKcd);--
nvzc28:#f1f3f4;--nvzc32:var(--Lm570b);--nvzc34:rgba(0,0,0,0.03)}body{--nvzc27:#000;--
nvzc29:var(--BRLwE);--nvzc30:#146c2e;--nvzc31:#b3261e;--nvzc33:#ecedef;--
nvzc36:#f7f8fa;--nvzc37:#f0f2f5}.YzCcne{--m3c1:#0b57d0;--
m3c2:rgba(245,248,255,0.5);--m3c3:#fff;--m3c5:#f5f8ff;--m3c6:#e5edff;--
m3c7:#d3e3fd;--m3c9:#001d35;--m3c10:#545d7e;--m3c11:#001d35;--
m3c12:#0b57d0;--m3c13:#a3c9ff;--m3c14:#001d35;--m3c15:#0b57d0;--
m3c16:#545d7e;--m3c17:#a3c9ff;--m3c18:#446eff;--m3c19:#b1c5ff;--m3c20:#c8ecff;--
m3c21:#a6c8ff;--m3c22:#d3e3fd;--m3c23:#3179ed}.YzCcne{--m3c22:var(--
BRLwE)}.rNsXBe{padding-bottom:20px}@media (max-width:1163.98px)
{.s7d4ef{width:auto}.hdzaWe{margin:auto}}.X6JNf{background:unset}.GkDqAd{padding-
left:0;padding-right:0}.jloFI{font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
style:normal;font-weight:400;font-size:16px;line-height:24px;color:var(--
m3c11);position:relative}.omFXyd.KMCbD{border-bottom:1px solid var(--
m3c17);width:100%;}.h7Tj7e{overflow-
y:clip;position:relative}.h7Tj7e:not(.zc75bb) .OS7YA{display:none}@keyframes fadeIn

```

{from{opacity:0}to{opacity:1}}.WAUd4{padding:16px 0}.OZ9ddf{max-
height:32px}.OZ9ddf{align-items:center;display:flex;flex-direction:row;grid-
gap:16px;justify-content:space-between;position:relative}.Fzsovc,.YWpX0d{font-
family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;z-index:1}.Fzsovc{font-
weight:500;color:var(--m3c9);font-size:14px}@media (max-width:1163.98px)
{.OZ9ddf{width:auto}}.nk9vdc{display:flex;flex-direction:row;gap:16px;align-
items:center}.QZvcUb{height:18px;width:18px}.xC2q7c{color:var(--bbQxAb);margin-
top:1px}.QZvcUb:hover{cursor:pointer}.fWWlmf{display:block}.JzISke{margin-
right:-10px}.YWpX0d{color:var(--IXoxUe);flex:1;font-size:16px;font-weight:400;line-
height:24px}.LT6XE,.p2M1Qe{display:flow-root;color:var(--m3c11);--m3c9:#0a0a0a;--
m3c11:#0a0a0a}.LT6XE{overflow-y:clip;position:relative}.LT6XE,.zNsLfb{overflow-
wrap:break-word;max-width:100%}.RDmXvc{margin-left:calc(-1*var(--center-abs-
margin));padding-left:var(--center-abs-margin);background-image:linear-
gradient(transparent 0px,rgba(255,255,255,0.9) 52px,#fff
80px)}.LrrQLb{height:148px}.RDmXvc{width:100%;position:absolute;transition:opacity
50ms linear;bottom:0;z-index:2}.in7vHe{background-color:inherit;color:var(--m3c11) !
important;border:1px var(--m3c17) solid}.IACQkd{bottom:20px}.zNsLfb{background-
color:#fff}.in7vHe:not(.BgrTif){max-width:632px;width:100%;}@media (max-
width:799.98px){.in7vHe{max-width:unset}}@media (min-width:940px) and (max-
width:1163.98px){.in7vHe{max-width:520px}}@media (min-width:800px) and (max-
width:939.98px){.in7vHe{max-width:408px}}@media (max-width:1024px)
{.in7vHe{width:100%}}.zNsLfb{padding-top:0;padding-
bottom:2px;position:relative}.zNsLfb{height:48px;transition:opacity 50ms
linear;width:100%;z-index:2}.in7vHe{box-sizing:border-box;border-
radius:999rem}.in7vHe.btku5b .niO4u{border:unset;height:48px;min-
height:48px}.in7vHe.FR7ZSc .niO4u{border-color:transparent}.UaVNfd{color:var(--
m3c15)}.MY2gn{margin-left:8px}.IACQkd{position:absolute;width:100%}@keyframes
fadein {0%{opacity:0}100%{opacity:1}}AI OverviewAn AI Overview is not available for
this searchCan't generate an AI overview right now. Try again later.AI
Overview(function(){
var k=this||self;var l;
function m(b=document){b=b.querySelector?("."style[nonce]);return b==null?"":b.nonce||
b.getAttribute("nonce")||"";var n=function(){this.g=k.document||
document};n.prototype.appendChild=function(b,a){b.appendChild(a)};function p(b){var
a=(l||=new n).g;var
c="STYLE";a.contentType==="application/xhtml+xml"&&(c=c.toLowerCase());a=a.create
Element(c);(c=m(document))&&a.setAttribute("nonce",c);a.setAttribute("data-late-
css","");a.appendChild(document.createTextNode(b));document.head.appendChild(a)}
window._F_installCss=window._F_installCss||p;var q=class{constructor()
{this.counters=new Map}setInitialValue(b,a,c){return this.counters.get(b)===void 0||c?
(this.counters.set(b,a,!0):!1}getUniquelId(b){const a=this.counters.get(b)||
0;this.counters.set(b,a+1);return a};var r={toString:function(b){let a=[],c=0;b-
=-2147483648;a[c+
+]="abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ".charAt(b%52);
for(b=Math.floor(b/52);b>0;)a[c+

```

```

+= "abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyzABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ0123456789".c
harAt(b%62),b=Math.floor(b/62);return a.join(""));var v=function(b){b=t(b);let
a=2654435769,c=2654435769,d=314159265;const e=b.length;let f=e,g=0;const
h=function(){a-=c;a-=d;a^=d>>>13;c-=d;c-=a;c^=a<<<8;d-=a;d-=c;d^=c>>>13;a-=c;a-
=d;a^=d>>>12;c-=d;c-=a;c^=a<<<16;d-=a;d-=c;d^=c>>>5;a-=c;a-=d;a^=d>>>3;c-=d;c-
=a;c^=a<<<10;d-=a;d-=c;d^=c>>>15};for(;f>=12;f-
=12,g+=12)a+=u(b,g),c+=u(b,g+4),d+=u(b,g+8),h();d+=e;switch(f){case
11:d+=b[g+10]<<<24;case 10:d+=b[g+9]<<<16;case 9:d+=b[g+8]<<<8;case
8:c+=b[g+7]<<<24;case 7:c+=b[g+6]<<<16;case 6:c+=b[g+5]<<<8;case 5:c+=
b[g+4];case 4:a+=b[g+3]<<<24;case 3:a+=b[g+2]<<<16;case 2:a+=b[g+1]<<<8;case
1:a+=b[g+0]}h();return r.toString(d)},t=function(b){const a=[];for(let c=0;c<b.length;c+
+)a.push(b.charCodeAt(c));return a},u=function(b,a){return b[a+0]+(b[a+1]<<<8)+
(b[a+2]<<<16)+(b[a+3]<<<24)};const
w=window.Proxy,x=["etimQ","GOOGLE_FEEDBACK_START_ARGUMENTS"];function
y(b){const a=Object.create(null),c=Object.create(null);return new w(Object.create(b),
{get:(d,e)=>{if(!(e in c)){if(e in a)return a[e];d=b[e];return typeof d==="function"?
(a[e]=new w(d,{apply:(f,g,h)=>f.apply(b,h)}),a[e]:d}},set:(d,e,f)=>{if(x.includes(e))return e
in b||(b[e]=f,!0;a[e]=f;delete c[e];return!0),has:(d,e)=>e in c?!0:e in
b,defineProperty:(d,e,f)=>{delete c[e];return
Reflect.defineProperty(a,e,f)},deleteProperty:(d,e)=>{c[e]=!0;return
Reflect.deleteProperty(a,e)},ownKeys:()=>{const d=Reflect.ownKeys(b);for(var e of
Object.keys(a))d.indexOf(e)===-1&&d.push(e);for(const f of
Object.keys(c))e=d.indexOf(f),e!==-1&&d.splice(e,1);return d}}})
function z(){const b=y(document);delete b.__wizmanager;delete
b.__wizdispatcher;const a=y(window);a.document=b;a.window=a;a.__=a;const
c=k.google;var d=new w(c,{get:(e,f)=>{if(f!=="ia"&&f!=="airmd")return f==="aipf"||
f==="rairdcb"||f==="xjs"||f==="jd"?void 0:c[f]}},a.google=d;
(d=window.WIZ_global_data)&&(a.WIZ_global_data=new w(d,{get:(e,f)=>e[_$/_.test(f)?
v(f.replace(/_$/,"")):f],has:(e,f)=>(_$/_.test(f)?v(f.replace(/_$/,"")):f)in
e}));b.defaultView=a;delete a.onerror;delete a.silk;delete a.userfeedback;return
a};function A(b){window.google=window.google||{};window.google.uniqueIdService||
(window.google.uniqueIdService=new q);const a=document.currentScript;let
c;if(a.__wp)c=a.__wp;else{c=z();a.__wp=c;c._F_jsUrl=a.src;c.guestRootElement=docu
ment.getElementById(a.dataset.gcid);c._ck=a.dataset.ck;c._rs=a.dataset.rs;const
d=a.dataset.t.replace(/^[/,,"").replace(/[/,,"").split(",").map(e=>Number(e));c._F_toggles=d;c._xjs_toggles=d}
a.dataset.gver&&B(a.dataset.gver);try{b.call(c,c)}finally{(b=a.__pr)&&b(c)}}
function B(b){window.google.gvers||(window.google.gvers={});window.google.gvers[b]=!
0>window.loaded_g_0=window.loaded_g_0||A;}.call(this); (function()
{window.sn={_setImageSrc:function(b,c){const a=document.getElementById(` ${b}`);a!
==null&&(a.src=c,a.setAttribute("data-deferred","2"),google.rll(a,!0,
())=>{a.setAttribute("data-imgprocessed","true")}));}).call(this);Sufism (Tasawwuf) is the
mystical dimension of Islam, focusing on direct, personal experience of God's presence
through love, devotion, and purification of the heart, rather than just outward rituals, with
practices like remembrance (dhikr) and meditation. It's not a separate sect but a path

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within Islam, emphasizing inner spiritual closeness to Allah, drawing from the Quran and Prophet Muhammad, and manifesting in various orders (tariqas) with unique traditions like the whirling dervishes (Mevlevi order) or music/poetry (Chishti order). Core Beliefs & Practices Goal: To attain divine love, knowledge, and intimacy with God (Allah) by purifying the self (ego). Methods: Meditation, recitation (dhikr), prayer, asceticism, and spiritual discipline. Inspiration: The life and teachings of Prophet Muhammad. Key Concepts: Annihilation of the self in God, deep spiritual awareness, and living the inner essence of faith. History & Development Origins: Emerged in the 8th century, developing from early ascetic movements (ascetics wearing coarse wool, suf, giving the name). Growth: Spread across the Muslim world, forming structured orders with masters and disciples, becoming a popular phenomenon. Relationship to Islam: Seen by most Sufis as the inner, spiritual core of mainstream Islam, complementing Sharia (Islamic law). Diversity & Orders Sufism includes many diverse paths (orders) like the Chishti (music/poetry) and Naqshbandi (silent meditation). Practices vary but always aim for the same spiritual goal, transcending sectarian and geographical boundaries. Significance Sufism offers a path to deep spiritual connection, countering materialism and fostering universal love. It has historically been a vital part of Islamic culture, emphasizing sincerity and direct experience of the Divine. What is Sufism? | Carolina Performing Arts Sufism describes the traditions of spiritual and ethical practice that have flourished in Muslim societies for over a thousand years... Carolina Performing Arts Religions - Islam: Sufism - BBC Practice. Sufis could be described as devout Muslims; praying five times a day, giving to charity, fasting etc, they adhere strict... BBC What Is Sufism? Islam and Mystical Experience by purifying the heart so the inner soul. um on sort of the path to to to intimacy with God um and Sufis across history have been ... YouTube Show all Religions - Islam: Sufism - BBC Practice. Sufis could be described as devout Muslims; praying five times a day, giving to charity, fasting etc, they adhere strict... BBC What Is Sufism? Islam and Mystical Experience by purifying the heart so the inner soul. um on sort of the path to to to intimacy with God um and Sufis across history have been ... YouTube What is Sufism? | Carolina Performing Arts Sufism describes the traditions of spiritual and ethical practice that have flourished in Muslim societies for over a thousand years... Carolina Performing Arts Sufism: Seeking God | The Pluralism Project Sufism is a stream of interpretation within Islam that emphasizes the interior path of mystical love, knowledge, and devotion to G... The Pluralism Project Sufism | Definition, Meditation & Mysticism - Lesson - Study.com What is Sufism? Sufism is a unique version of Islam that incorporates elements of mysticism with the worship of Allah. While some ... Study.com How is Sufism related to Islam? Sufism is often referred to as Islamic mysticism and has historically served as a central part of Islamic practice. While often ca... YouTube SUFISM: The Mystics of Islam Sufism is the religious philosophy of Islam. The oldest definition describes it as the apprehension of divine realities. Followers... YouTube Sufism | Definition, History, Beliefs, Significance, & Facts - Britannica Sufism, mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct p... Britannica What Is Sufism? Sufism is a form of Islamic mysticism or asceticism. It involves belief and practice that helps Muslims attain nearness to Allah t... Tony Blair Institute for Global Change Sufism summary | Britannica Sufism is a mystical movement within Islam that seeks to find

divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. Britannica
youtube.com carolinaperformingarts.org pluralism.org bbc.co.uk britannica.com study.com
nstitute.global youtube.com britannica.com youtube.com Dive deeper in AI Mode Copy
text Save to Google Drive When you export, you will allow Google Search to save AI-
powered information to your Google Drive. Got it Save to Gmail When you export, you will
allow Google Search to save AI-powered information to your Gmail. Got it Save to Google
Drive When you export, you will allow Google Search to save AI-powered information in
a Colab notebook to your Google Drive. Got it Draft in Gmail Google Docs Export
Share This public link creates and shares a thread in AI Mode, and any personal
information it contains. You can delete a public link anytime, but not copies made by
others. If you share with third parties, their policies
apply. Facebook WhatsApp X Email Click to copy link Share link Link copied Share Thank you
Your feedback helps Google improve. See our Privacy Policy.
Share more feedback Report a problem Close Positive feedback Negative feedback Thank
you

Your feedback helps Google improve. See our Privacy Policy.
Share more feedback Report a problem Close Show more Explain this Related
images Copy text Access this menu with Ctrl+Shift+X (function() {var ctid='eKlZJc';
(function() { 'use strict'; function l(a,b) { a.dataset.attnms=b; google.sx(null,
) => { window.dispatchEvent(new CustomEvent("UPaGwc", { detail:
{ mr:a } })); } encodeURIComponent("\$,/:;?@[^`{}").substr(1).replace(/%/g,"");
encodeURIComponent("&\$,/:;?@[^`{}").substr(1).replace(/%/g,"");
var m=function(a){a=a.tabIndex;return typeof a==="number"&&a>=0&&a<32768};var
n=function(a,b){const c=a.nodeType===9?a.ownerDocument||a.document;return
c.defaultView&&c.defaultView.getComputedStyle&&(a=c.defaultView.getComputedStyle
(a,null))?a[b]||a.getPropertyValue(b)||"":""};const p=["scroll","auto"];function q(a)
{a.hasAttribute("aria-hidden")||(a.setAttribute("ahbak","true"),a.setAttribute("aria-
hidden","true"))}
function r(a){if(!a.hasAttribute("data-tibak")){if(a.hasAttribute("tabindex")){var
b=a.getAttribute("tabindex");a.setAttribute("tabindex","-1");a.setAttribute("data-tibak",b)}
else{({g:b=0})={g:1};if(a instanceof HTMLElement||a instanceof SVGElement){var c;if(!
(c=!a.tagName==="A"&&a.hasAttribute("href")||a.tagName==="INPUT"||
a.tagName==="TEXTAREA"||a.tagName==="SELECT"||a.tagName==="BUTTON"?!
a.disabled&&(!a.hasAttribute("tabindex")||m(a)):a.hasAttribute("tabindex")&&m(a))){if(b)
{b:{for(b=a;b=b.parentElement;if(b instanceof
HTMLElement&&b.inert){b=!0;break b}b=!1}b||(b=n(a,"visibility"),b=b==="hidden"||
b==="collapse");if(!b)b:{for(b=a;b=b.parentElement;if(n(b,"display")==="none"){b=!
0;break b}b=!1}c=b}b=c?!1:!0} else b=!1;if(!b)a:{if(a instanceof
HTMLElement)for(b=0;b<p.length;b++)if(c=p[b],a.style.overflowX===c||
a.style.overflowY===c){b=!0;break a}b=!1}
b&&(a.setAttribute("tabindex","-1"),a.setAttribute("data-tibak","none"))}
for(b=0;b<a.children.length;b++)r(a.children[b])};function t(a,b=-1)
{if(b<0)q(a),r(a);else{var c=a.getBoundingClientRect(),d=[];u(a,c.top+b,d,c);for(const e of
d)q(e),r(e)}function u(a,b,c,d){d!=null||(d=a.getBoundingClientRect());let e=!
0;if(d.x===0&&d.y===0&&d.height===0&&d.width===0){const

[illegible]

luuG9qz7tQQZ29d60pN2rOmOuVmXlyqeG9lVIFY9PI0QdiKNFAX2HmPpV+14VJlwyNBP
LNdSTfQja8lGO3EgGRT3NklrVpNsJYe5rpIOC6CC0uR2xVD6VNb2VvCv3dTZ75x/
vVHjko2yHypypHN8TjC8OVTzJGK2uBqJeC2Tnn4Kg/AY/
pXM8XvJWtwv1eZE6O6kCur+i8JXgFjnrFn4Ek/
1qmOLUNkZS+xYeEMO1Dmtg4xWho2xio6c7U6NZl3FkChUrWPd2Jj+6K6+TQlzxgDc1
Ue2huB5WwM4OaLhYYZGmcbo6Gn8Mdq6G54KS2pRkHsKpHhknNAx3xuK53GSZ1R
yRZm6Ril4YzVhoSCQcgjpSEZ7mkspoD4Q9KbwhVnTt1paKzYCulwetGt7Np3Kp0GScb
AVIRliABueQq7dsLGzMMbfaN99t9/
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(fitra); Sufism seeks to shed corruption and return to this childlike closeness to God.

Divine Love: Emphasizes unconditional love for God, transcending fear of hell or desire for heaven.

Spiritual Path: Life is a journey toward God, guided by spiritual teachers (shaykhs) within organized orders (tariqahs).

Key Practices: Dhikr (Remembrance): Repetitive chanting of God's names or phrases to stay connected with the Divine. Sama (Spiritual Listening): Use of music, poetry, and sometimes dance (like Whirling Dervishes) for mystical experience. Renunciation: Letting go of ego, desires, and material concerns (symbolized by coarse wool robes in early Sufis). Meditation & Contemplation: Deep introspection to experience God's presence.

Relationship to Islam: Sufism is considered the esoteric or inner dimension of Islam, not a separate sect, aiming to fulfill the outward law (Sharia) with inner spiritual reality (Haqika). It draws from the Quran and Sunnah but focuses on the mystical interpretation, tracing spiritual lineage back to Prophet Muhammad and his companions like Ali.

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How different is Sufism from Islam? Sufism is an intentional, intensified expression of that universal state of submission, which could be called Islam. More than a doctrine or a belief system, Sufism is an experiential approach to the Divine. It is a tradition of enlightenment that carries the essential truth forward through time.

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AI Overview

Yes, Sufis pray five times a day, as this is one of the Five Pillars of Islam that all practicing Muslims, including Sufis, are expected to follow. In addition to the five daily prayers (Salah), Sufis often engage in extra prayers and devotional practices known as (Zikr) (remembrance of Allah).

Basic Islamic Prayers: Sufis perform the five obligatory daily prayers (Fajr, Dhuhr, Asr, Maghrib), and (Isha) alongside other Muslims.

Additional Devotions: Beyond the mandatory prayers, Sufis frequently perform extra Zikr, which are extra acts of remembrance and worship that vary by Sufi order.

Goal: These additional practices are intended to deepen their spiritual connection to Allah and are a key part of the Sufi path, which aims to perfect their relationship with God.

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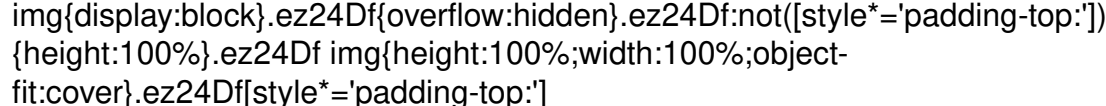
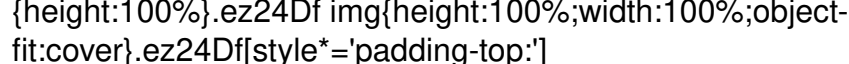
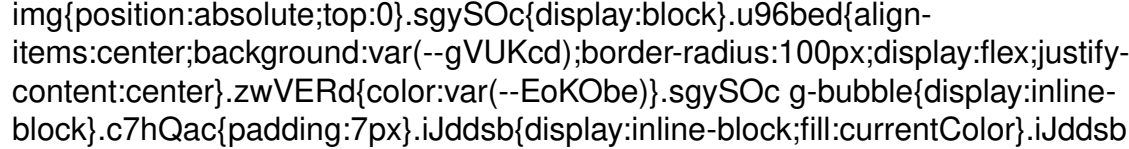
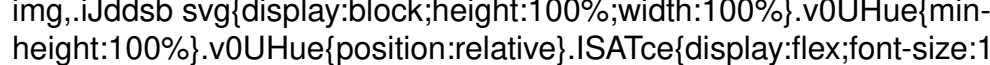
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weight:400}.V8fWH{border:0;clip:rect(0 0 0 0);clip-path:polygon(0 0,0 0,0
```

0);height:1px;margin:-1px;overflow:hidden;padding:0;position:absolute;width:1px;white-space:nowrap;-webkit-appearance:none;appearance:none;z-index:-1000;user-select:none}.G0maxb.G0maxb .hUXwKc.hUXwKc{position:absolute;bottom:0;right:0}.G0maxb.G0maxb.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .hUXwKc.hUXwKc{position:absolute}.QyJl3d{background-color:var(--xhUGwc);color:#666;box-shadow:0 4px 16px rgba(0,0,0,0.2)}.oQcPt{background-color:var(--xhUGwc)}.QyJl3d{border:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.2);position:absolute;z-index:9120}.nFdFHf{animation:g-bubble-show .2s forwards}.bE3Kif{animation:g-bubble-hide .2s forwards}@keyframes g-bubble-show{from{opacity:0}to{opacity:1}}@keyframes g-bubble-hide{from{opacity:1}to{opacity:0}}.QyJl3d.QJnoze{border-radius:12px}.QyJl3d.SiOjJb{border-left-width:0;border-right-width:0;width:100%}.QyJl3d.PnQMie{background-color:#1f1f1f;border:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.5);color:#dadce0}.QyJl3d.LWen5c{background-color:#1a73e8;border:none;color:#fff;z-index:9100}.tYmfxe{transform:translate(2.5px,1.8px) rotateZ(45deg);position:absolute;z-index:9121}[dir=rtl] .tYmfxe{transform:translate(-2.5px,1.8px) rotateZ(45deg)}.IBPZu.tYmfxe{transform:translate(2.5px,-5.7px) rotateZ(45deg)}[dir=rtl] .IBPZu.tYmfxe{transform:translate(-2.5px,-5.7px) rotateZ(45deg)}.oQcPt{border-bottom:none;border-left:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.2);border-right:none;border-top:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.2);box-sizing:border-box;height:13.435px;width:13.435px}.IBPZu .oQcPt{border-bottom:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.2);border-left:none;border-right:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.2);border-top:none}.PnQMie .oQcPt{background-color:#1f1f1f;border-color:rgba(0,0,0,.5)}.LWen5c .oQcPt{background-color:#1a73e8;border:none}.nnFGuf{display:none}.c5aZPb{cursor:pointer}.Dcltre{pointer-events:none}.TYQ8Af{clip:rect(1px,1px,1px,1px);height:1px;overflow:hidden;position:absolute;white-space:nowrap;width:1px;z-index:-1000;top:3px;right:3px}.UjBGL{display:block;color:#1f1f1f}.CcNe6e{cursor:pointer;display:inline-block}.shnMoc.CcNe6e{display:block}.v4Zpbe.CcNe6e{display:flex;height:100%;width:100%}g-dropdown-menu{display:inline-block;position:relative}.Jb0Zif g-dropdown-menu{vertical-align:middle}.WNN1b{background-color:var(--xhUGwc)}.adGN6[disabled]{pointer-events:none;cursor:default;background-color:var(--YaleMb)}.XQIMve:hover{background:rgba(112,117,122,.20)}g-menu.wCJA7{border-radius:0;padding-bottom:1px;padding-top:1px}.XQIMve{padding:5px}.XQIMve.YVmrnf{padding:0 5px}.XQIMve.zrQX3c{margin-bottom:-10px;margin-left:-10px;margin-top:-10px;padding:15px 8px 15px 22px}.XQIMve.zrQX3c.BrVFic{margin-left:0;padding:15px 18px 15px 12px}.XQIMve.zrQX3c.wSFoM{margin:-10px}.XQIMve{padding:2px}.ZS5sq{border-radius:50%}.N1yuQd{color:var(--bbQxAb);cursor:pointer;display:block;position:relative}.EHQHR{display:inline-block;font-size:14px;min-width:62px;vertical-align:middle}.hoPMEf{padding:8px;vertical-align:middle}.g7whne{text-

overflow:unset;overflow:visible;display:block;position:relative}.n7T2bf{display:block}.jom
 N3c,.LD7sbd{color:var(--bbQxAb)}.Lqky8b{white-space:nowrap}.Lqky8b .N1yuQd{font-
 size:14px;padding-bottom:4px;padding-top:4px}.Lqky8b .Aq6XUb{padding-
 left:8px;padding-right:8px}.BnL0df .N1yuQd{left:-8px}.BnL0df .EHQHR{width:100%}
 @media (max-width:799.98px)
 {.TQc1id.vVVcqf .SjLxGf{display:none}}.TQc1id .qLRx3b{font-size:14px;line-
 height:1.58}.VjDLd .tjvcx,.IVvPP .tjvcx,.kno-kp .tjvcx,.VjDLd .kp-wholepage-
 osrp .tjvcx,.TQc1id .ss6qqb .tjvcx,.TQc1id .trNcde .tjvcx{display:inline-
 block;height:19px;overflow-
 y:hidden}.IVvPP .q0vns,.TQc1id .q0vns,.u7yw9 .q0vns,.z4oRlf .q0vns{align-
 items:center;display:inline-flex}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .mgAbYb{font-size:22px}.TQc1id .z4oRlf
 .mgAbYb{font-size:18px}.IVvPP .qDOt0b h3,.TQc1id .qDOt0b h3,.IVvPP .W0url
 h3,.TQc1id .W0url h3,.z4oRlf .qDOt0b h3,.z4oRlf .W0url h3{font-size:14px;line-
 height:18px}.TQc1id .KFFQ0c{display:none}@media (min-width:800px) and (max-
 width:939.98px){.YNk70c .ufC5Cb{grid-column:2/span 8;}}@media (min-width:940px)
 and (max-width:1163.98px){.YNk70c .ufC5Cb{grid-column:2/span 10;}}@media (max-
 width:1163.98px){.YNk70c .vVVcqf{display:block;grid-column:span 5/-2;max-
 width:100%;}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .Jb0Zif.pEZBSb,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf.CelyHb .XWkUDf,.s6JM
 6d .z4oRlf .CelyHb .XWkUDf,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf.CelyHb.XWkUDf,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .CelyH
 b.XWkUDf,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .ss6qqb{margin-bottom:44px}.TQc1id .z4oRlf{max-
 width:100%}@media (min-width:800px)
 {.s6JM6d .z4oRlf{height:0;margin:0;overflow:hidden;padding:0;}}@media (max-
 width:799.98px){.TQc1id .z4oRlf{height:0;margin:0;overflow:hidden;padding:0 !
 important}}html:not(.zAoYTe) .kp-wholepage a{outline:0}.ss6qqb{border-bottom:1px
 solid var(--gS5jXb);line-height:1.58}#rhs .ss6qqb{border:1px solid #dadce0;border-
 radius:8px}#rhs .u7yw9{border:0;border-left:1px solid var(--gS5jXb);border-
 radius:0}.ky4hfd{display:none}.YB4h9{background-color:var(--TMYS9);color:var(--
 EpFNW);padding:18px 60px 18px
 12px;position:relative}.KsRP6{display:flex}.QpPSMb{align-
 items:center;display:flex;justify-content:space-between}.nwVKo{align-
 items:center;display:flex}.r2VLS{flex:0 0 22px;height:20px;padding:1px 0 1px
 6px;width:22px}.nwVKo .r2VLS{margin-bottom:auto}.TQc1id .KsRP6{padding:0 0 16px
 20px}.TQc1id .MDY31c,.z4oRlf .MDY31c{flex-grow:1}.s6JM6d .ss6qqb .KsRP6{margin:0
 0 16px 0;padding:0}.ssJ7i{color:var(--YLNHc);font-family:Google
 Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-weight:500;word-break:break-
 word}.XqFnDf .ssJ7i,.M8Ogle .ssJ7i{font-size:28px;line-height:36px;}.XqFnDf .ssJ7i
 br,.M8Ogle .ssJ7i br{content:' ';display:contents}.s6JM6d .ssJ7i{font-size:28px;line-
 height:36px;}.TQc1id .ssJ7i{font-size:28px;line-height:36px;}.iAlpCb{color:var(--
 bbQxAb);font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-size:14px;line-height:20px;margin-
 top:4px;font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-weight:400;line-
 height:18px}.y1yadf{position:relative;display:inline-
 block}.Zj92Hf{display:flex}.xDKLO{.ss6qqb .xDKLO{padding-top:0}.xfX4Ac{font-
 size:14px}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .pESs7c:not(:last-of-type){border-bottom:1px solid
 #cccccc}.TQc1id .z4oRlf .Jl5uCe:not(:last-of-type){border-bottom:none}
 #rhs .YpyODE.yWNJXb{margin:20px 16px 0}#rhs .u7yw9 .yWNJXb{border-bottom:1px

solid var(--gS5jXb);margin:24px 0 0 20px;padding-bottom:20px}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .u7yw9 .yWNJXb{padding-bottom:20px}
#rhs .u7yw9 .yWNJXb.W21iod,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .u7yw9 .yWNJXb.W21iod{padding-bottom:0}#rhs .YpyODE.yWNJXb.qzPQNd,.YpyODE.yWNJXb.qzPQNd{margin-top:0}
#rhs .u7yw9 .yWNJXb:last-child{border:0;padding-bottom:0}.yWNJXb{margin-bottom:44px}.Jb0Zif .yWNJXb{margin:44px 0}.M8Ogle .yWNJXb{margin:0}.YpyODE.yWNJXb{margin-top:16px;margin-bottom:0}.Jb0Zif .qzPQNd{margin-top:16px}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .YpyODE.pESs7c:not(:last-of-type){border-bottom:1px solid rgba(0,0,0,.12)}.TQc1id .z4oRlf .YpyODE.Jl5uCe:not(:last-of-type){border-bottom:none}.ZYbY5b{bottom:0;left:0;position:absolute;right:0;top:0}.TUX5yb
img{transition:transform 200ms}.TUX5yb:focus.TUX5yb:hover
img{transform:scale(1.15)}.CYJS5e,a.CYJS5e,a.CYJS5e:visited{color:var(--YLNNHc)}.pxiwBd .Ww4FFb{box-shadow:none}.e8Ck0d{display:flex;flex-direction:column;font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;height:312px;max-width:min(1121px,100vw - 56px);min-width:100%;padding-bottom:24px;position:relative;width:100%}.e8Ck0d.oi2l4d{max-width:1121px;min-width:1065px}.s6JM6d .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc{height:280px}.s6JM6d .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc,.s6JM6d .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe,.s6JM6d .e8Ck0d.IAplyc{padding-bottom:0}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc{padding-bottom:24px}.q5jdGd,.K91ENd{display:none}.M8Ogle .q5jdGd,.M8Ogle .K91ENd{display:unset}.W0url,.QejDDf{position:relative}@media (forced-colors:active){.W0url{border:1px solid ButtonBorder}.W0url.GHMsie{grid-column:span 2}.W0url.SodP3b{grid-row:span 2}.W0url:not([data-nohu]){cursor:pointer}.o6dXvc{border-radius:0;overflow:visible}.VNzqVe{height:100%;flex:1;width:100%}.e6hL7d{display:grid;grid-column-gap:20px;grid-gap:20px;grid-template-rows:repeat(2,minmax(0,1fr));height:100%}.e6hL7d.As9MV{grid-template-columns:repeat(4,minmax(0,1fr))}.e6hL7d.zb0Dlf{grid-template-columns:repeat(5,minmax(0,1fr))}.e8Ck0d.IAplyc .W0url,.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe .W0url,.e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc .W0url,.e8Ck0d.KCFg2b .W0url{margin-left:0;margin-right:0}.e8Ck0d.IAplyc .W0url,.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe .W0url,.e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc .W0url,.e8Ck0d.KCFg2b .W0url,.e8Ck0d.IAplyc .Bn2Feb:not(:hover),.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe .Bn2Feb:not(:hover),.e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc .Bn2Feb:not(:hover),.e8Ck0d.KCFg2b .Bn2Feb:not(:hover){width:100%}.WVVXpe{display:flex}.QejDDf{grid-column:span 4;grid-row:span 2}.e6hL7d.As9MV .QejDDf{grid-column:span 2}.e6hL7d.zb0Dlf .QejDDf{grid-column:span 3}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e6hL7d{grid-auto-flow:dense}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-ccm="TT"] .QejDDf,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-ccm="TT"] .W0url[data-vdb]{grid-column:span 1;grid-row:span 1;min-height:100%}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-ccm="TSS"] .QejDDf{grid-column:span 1;grid-row:span 2;min-height:100%}.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-ccm="TSS"] .W0url[data-vdb]{grid-column:span 1;grid-row:span 1;min-height:100%}.W0url div[data-eboh] div[data-hwc]

{bottom:10px;opacity:0;position:absolute}.M8Ogle .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc:not(.cBZvAd):not(.qL6S2e)
 {height:308px}.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe,.e8Ck0d.IAplyc,.e8Ck0d.cBZvAd{height:auto}.M8Ogle
 .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc.eN5DFc .e6hL7d,.M8Ogle .e8Ck0d.IDX8Cc.eN5DFc .QejDDf,.e8Ck0d.
 MXhHSe.eN5DFc .QejDDf,.e8Ck0d.IAplyc.eN5DFc .QejDDf{min-height:302px;max-
 height:336px}.TQc1id .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe .QejDDf,.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-
 rfcl2] .QejDDf{min-height:100%;max-
 height:unset}.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe,.e8Ck0d.IAplyc{padding-bottom:24px !important}.TQc1id
 .e8Ck0d.MXhHSe .QejDDf,.e8Ck0d.MXhHSe[data-
 rfcl2] .QejDDf,.TQc1id .e8Ck0d.IAplyc .QejDDf{height:240px}.IAplyc .e6hL7d,.MXhHSe .
 e6hL7d,.IDX8Cc .e6hL7d,.KCFg2b .e6hL7d{grid-
 gap:12px}.IDX8Cc .e6hL7d.As9MV{grid-template-columns:repeat(3,minmax(0,1fr))}
 @media (min-width:800px){.pnbBSb.IDX8Cc .e6hL7d.As9MV{grid-template-
 columns:428px repeat(2,minmax(0,1fr))}.IDX8Cc .e6hL7d.As9MV .QejDDf{grid-
 column:span 1}.MXhHSe .e6hL7d{grid-template-columns:repeat(2,minmax(0,1fr));grid-
 template-
 rows:initial}.MXhHSe .e6hL7d .QejDDf,.MXhHSe .e6hL7d .W0url.GHMsie:not(.SodP3b),
 .MXhHSe .e6hL7d.As9MV .W0url.GHMsie,.MXhHSe .e6hL7d .W0url.BmnyM{grid-
 column:span 2}.MXhHSe .e6hL7d:not(.zb0Dlf) .W0url{grid-column:span
 1}.MXhHSe .e6hL7d .W0url:not(.o6dXvc),.IAplyc .e6hL7d .W0url:not(.o6dXvc){min-
 height:100px}.TQc1id .MXhHSe .e6hL7d .W0url,.TQc1id .IAplyc .e6hL7d .W0url{min-
 height:unset}.s6JM6d .e8Ck0d[data-ccm] .e6hL7d .W0url{min-height:fit-
 content}.z4oRlf .IDX8Cc .W0url.EVeTFb,.s6JM6d .z4oRlf .MXhHSe:not([data-
 ccm="2COL"]) .W0url.EVeTFb{display:none}.IAplyc .e6hL7d .QejDDf{grid-column:span
 1}.IAplyc .e6hL7d{grid-template-columns:initial;grid-template-rows:initial}.IAplyc .e6hL7d
 .W0url,.IAplyc .e6hL7d .W0url.GHMsie:not(.SodP3b){grid-column:span 1;min-
 width:100%}.IAplyc .VNzqVe{height:unset}.W0url[data-animatingcontainment]{transition-
 property:height,width;background,border-radius}.W0url{curve:null;transition-
 property:width;transition-
 duration:200ms}.W0url.Bn2Feb,.W0url.fidcGf,.W0url.BOht8d,.W0url[data-
 animatingcontainment]{transition-timing-function:cubic-bezier(0.05,0.7,0.1,1);transition-
 duration:300ms}.W0url div[data-expc]{opacity:0;pointer-
 events:none;position:absolute;top:0;visibility:hidden}@keyframes fade-in {0%{opacity:0}
 100%{opacity:1}}@keyframes fade-out {0%{opacity:1}100%{opacity:0}}.W0url: hover
 a,.W0url a: hover{text-
 decoration:none}.SwNFKd{width:100%}.nNT2Db{overflow:hidden}.QJ1ykf{border-
 radius:20px;display:grid;grid-gap:2px;grid-template-
 rows:repeat(2,minmax(0,1fr));overflow:hidden}.mW90w{overflow:hidden;position:relative
 }.gLkeC{position:absolute}.QJ1ykf{bottom:0;left:0;position:absolute;right:0;top:0}.QJ1ykf
 .SwuGKe{grid-template-
 columns:repeat(4,minmax(0,1fr))}.e8Ck0d .QejDDf.i64Mee .QJ1ykf.SwuGKe{grid-
 template-rows:2fr 1fr;grid-template-columns:1fr 1fr}.mW90w{grid-column:span 2;grid-
 row:span
 1}.IDX8Cc .QJ1ykf.SwuGKe .mW90w.KoyeEb,.e8Ck0d .QejDDf.i64Mee .QJ1ykf.SwuGK
 e .mW90w:not(.XJu8V){grid-column:span 1}.IDX8Cc .mW90w{grid-

row:initial}.MXhHSe .SwNFKd{min-height:200px}.MXhHSe .nNT2Db{padding-bottom:60%}.gLkeC{bottom:14px;right:15px}.R0fvy{display:grid;gap:2px;grid-template-columns:repeat(10,minmax(0,1fr));grid-template-rows:repeat(2,minmax(0,1fr))}.R0fvy .mW90w{grid-row:span 1;height:100%}.R0fvy .mW90w.a0sZqd{grid-column:span 5}.y01PGd{pointer-events:none}.nNEgVe:focus-within:focus-visible .y01PGd{border:1px solid Highlight;outline:Highlight auto 1px;outline:-webkit-focus-ring-color auto 1px;outline-offset:-2px}.uhHOWf{position:relative}.uhHOWf::after{background-color:rgba(0,0,0,0.03);bottom:0;content:"";display:block;left:0;pointer-events:none;position:absolute;right:0;top:0}.uhHOWf{display:block}.ez24Df{overflow:hidden}.ez24Df:not([style*='padding-top:']){height:100%}.ez24Df{height:100%;width:100%;object-fit:cover}.ez24Df[style*='padding-top:']{position:absolute;top:0}.sgySOc{display:block}.u96bed{align-items:center;background:var(--gVUKcd);border-radius:100px;display:flex;justify-content:center}.zwVERd{color:var(--EoKObe)}.sgySOc g-bubble{display:inline-block}.c7hQac{padding:7px}.iJddsb{display:inline-block;fill:currentColor}.iJddsb.iJddsb svg{display:block;height:100%;width:100%}.v0UHue{min-height:100%}.v0UHue{position:relative}.ISATce{display:flex;font-size:14px;line-height:18px}.ISATce:not(.OIITb) .y171A:hover .iJ25xd.AcUIBb{text-decoration:underline}.ISATce{bottom:11px;left:14px;padding:6px;right:14px}.ISATce:not(.OIITb){padding:0}.QSDnl{color:var(--IXoxUe);font-size:14px}.VelOt:not(.lg2F2d) .iJ25xd{color:var(--JKqx2)}.y171A,.y171A:visited{color:inherit}div[data-uncollapsible] div[data-lh]{-webkit-line-clamp:unset !important}.v0UHue[data-collapsed]:hover,.v0UHue[data-expandable]:hover{cursor:pointer}.rgJgXc{padding:20px 0 0}.GFuwlF,.BAqyXc,.ekPvWc{font-size:14px;line-height:22px}.d5wodd{position:relative}.wtBS9{width:100%;display:-webkit-box;-webkit-box-orient:vertical;overflow:hidden}.d5wodd[expanded] .wtBS9{display:initial;overflow:visible}.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .ctHNac{display:none}.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .hUXwKc{position:absolute;bottom:0;right:0;background:linear-gradient(to left,var(--xhUGwc) 0%,var(--xhUGwc) calc(100% - 8px),transparent)}.d5wodd[expanded] .Yh5dPc{padding-right:8px}.l7Wnjd{position:relative;top:-2px}.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .AGDyff{background:linear-gradient(to left,var(--xhUGwc) 0%,var(--xhUGwc) calc(100% - 55px),transparent)}.oEHCHd{padding:0 8px 0 55px;margin-right:8px;border-right:1px solid #d2d2d2;vertical-align:bottom}.tAmS0c{display:inline-block;max-width:60%;overflow:hidden;text-overflow:ellipsis;vertical-align:bottom}@media (forced-colors:active){.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .AGDyff.AGDyff,.d5wodd:not([expanded]) .hUXwKc.hUXwKc{background:var(--xhUGwc)}.oEHCHd.oEHCHd{padding-left:8px}}.AGDyff.l7Wnjd{top:-1px}.lQhcl{align-items:center;display:inline-flex}.XklSS{font-size:14px;color:var(--JKqx2) !important}.VmgTu.lQhcl{align-items:center;bottom:0;color:var(--IXoxUe);display:inline-flex;font-size:14px;position:relative}.tGYVp{display:inline-flex;flex-wrap:nowrap;text-

[illegible]

[illegible]

c3Nzc3Nzc3Nzc3Nzc3Nzc3Nzc3Nzc3N//AABEIAE4ATgMBIgACEQEDEQH/
xAAcAAACAgMBAQAAAAAAAAAAAAAFBgMHAAQIAgH/
xAA4EAABAwIEBAQEAWcFAAAAAAABAAGMEABEFEEiExBhNBYSJRgBEycZGhUmLwF
BUjJDOSsgdCcsHR/8QAGAEAAwEBAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAwQFBgL/
xAAKEQACAgIBAwQDAAAAAAAAAAAAABAAGADBBESITFBBRNRYSJx4f/
aAAwDAQACEQMRAD8AuEmvIZWUxJk8uOlaQVuKCEJFyonQVW/
EOKnE5BecJSwg2aRmtYedvOj3GcxrOyyp3MGvEpoa5ldLjsPreq+xFTkiSvmqUpwelsp
OqR0Kj0+W9SMzLPue2vYd5SxcccZ8wtB4uxTDnVpaWH2VA5WngV5D5g3v6XtTXwj
xmzjalRZwZizUkBCA4LPD8o89Ntap6XNbDq0tnmhBsUINkJPc9T961I8t9maw+goBZWl
wIRoTYgjX03pzGtZhpoO+le4nTFfahhyW5kNiUz/AE320uJ+Shce9TU3EZDLNnozH/
KRQQNDPmN1aW63+3/IFMYWtvD3C3bMbAXF+tKMqS8kkOuG97ZisgAjcWA/
VjWc9XxHyLIIPQCU8O8VVn7MeqysrK0cmSquOufg+Jzn31ACWQYzhVoE3F7+ViTftS
W46/
MYCWA6zBUSVHd2T+ZVtgfLyt0q4eO4HD+N4YcPxyXycqgtJYWOag9hY79xVS4pBEf8
Ak8KkPLZbIDSpMULKRoSskdj9qi5VK1tyB7mVsewuuiO0Bz+Y22tKHENoRZIGUAD8ot
1oXHYdcfbLTgQVLCcwJO5ttRKZAQ3LWHpTmSwUhRSmwBF7+WtiL1oNq8LnKCsjeoJ
+lNY4GtTmwzqbCoQw3C4kEOFWrmUNZyLFWUAXt6VtVy9DxrFyuPHiYpOQIXhCEyF
hKfS+gp1YxXEIrbfKmy81viL6jr9aYsya6yATFExnfrLexdKVxMqiQCoXloOkRtGwhski9ib3
A67Hz8+tIp41xRtviTV/tUcn4iAFp+R679frTPhkUS47M6LIQ4063ZKr26/
LfTaoPqyByLWfS+B9x7F2n4BdmPFL/
FeMLgMpiRVZZLyScw3Qnt3NMFVvxbKJ4ikX15eVI7AJBq3m3GmosO8Rxaw9mjFmbK
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VFJaShKRICU7EkkDr960ZjLkCFKZIBKXC0hyw876jvqKcHVrRFVHTkTzGzmum+bTcHb
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IUeutcmk0P5g3JR+YnTFVtxQxn4ilKSQbq69LJTT5MkvsyWW0tXbXmJUNdgNLeZJ77V
XWLvhWMyZDpK2w8UKsCL0b1Vt06HzFcEafcUsbTyMRcB1aSf7XBf3o1zuYzyxopN9b
0F4vcQlbMtOgs61b0Ch/
ga9RJYkRypCvgukn5af9VIKk1K0ogjkRCbZjyGnFBslcRdBUR8RGw6A9/
tSDjmCNxX1upmM/
wARWrTaipR9SacUvBLRV4R4L5raC+twBuaXMWIJXCcQhxhCTulKBmOvnTOJyRvxg3l
11kkJMSNh/
wDK3NhZxa02UVbEnfa+mtCcJl8mQsq1bXfP27+9QR3g3CfUFXKzIA8rDX/
IfSsiNFGUKOghm+Vxf2p32wA2+u4PlvWo5sxGpCUInRQ+ICoBFGY5rAaioeGcSUnOgK
spJyk9ulFuVeQpKfFoTp86nqzVOVMMQGG5aaOIGcQxVn93vx3YjKVF4LCkqB7XGh+
+9JS3uama28NXgXsx3uL3A9CPpTLLwmGcBViyW8sxLX9VNwfljQ7UnylF0H8umo3/
AEKZ9SLkKG/
cXxQBvUUelnhSWjq40tLoHmLFJP0NZwIGmfumY9NaKlbpSWVK0K1E9OxNte+IHGsF
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7SD5+e+1TYmt2VFW0F5LgKBHQpsU0HmBVw18Q3Ek7grF1oYfcbWg8sXsk6X7UNnR
G2sNiJLTXMeYUpSkp1KiFEa+oFeLSOIHIQkrQy4cxcccNztuR3PtRDi08iRCyDRAskdhai
Vji6pvr/
JyeqlomwEocktx3jlbzELPa4J9rUQlhwKce0TmNrD29x6UOlP5M5YTuDv7VO04qa4xFCil

[illegible]

[illegible]

FVCGKdSGsQG76tP8A3gZ+lqMn/Lc/
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VblxkKQAD8Nyvr8rHEUnCfEUtMBWZytPI0GhzG2kq3MvqG2507YOpOGaeNpWzTMIZ
WaRmZA0h06kC2DBgPPe333xzeRs4m5yfhiJVFESDREsYtJUSbCNT6DoD73JPryT9jal
LE6UzgAIVQOd9PLtcv/
ALLdO3nvjf8AZLh0iolaSqaOXWZUNvBqXT4bWIsAP105cS5bktFw/
mNTIzOKhKSZ0fewY62va+zam69sGmXYfHR7U5zwisTcnK1cgE7Ut+gPYjf4jt7YErsyyu
WblQcNEGXMdStJEdZAvuCpJvot09jbasaHjLiSgVVps4m0p0EgWT/0Dgyoz/
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FLNGqPwtHSpMpeExpHGzLeRQbGM+R2/vizWrubGhqAGhG7KCLFt/
iJ+f3xGy8loYYEj5cUQOiM0dKqb7fXtiVGgKjr6vL3e9PQSK5a7LIUbyPUlp7/
AG9NwnqaVzpNNZwNwdQ+fQ4s2v4dyrrDui1EbFvESRcjubD6+eIkq4IgMjJNTV0ce/
wAMq3Nva3cHtixUQ0WRU6yA6u1mXTYrfTuAfpsPbHCfnrGBo0qxBI2DdSSAASb+u
NFqKXM6USvFrWocinJl1BWBBuRfzt6+vn0VaglbY6ULO4ijYqnUX27Xve3n3wg4PUwSl
WijmKMF8LoFBsOwDbfXCtmmUZuxEsdd+LCkq8VQ2IZUPVdtunW/
Y4bUjMFKnPdpGvaSU7tt38+g8rYHpKxJXaINJqMRIBsBYBiBb1v+hibogrPMMmoYSR
mGVVuXnvNTNzoh9L2+mGzL8l4KprPQZRmefTAahUZhKaenJ+gJH9JxPlkmWTSnLkW
NiSpG57X27flgNZNSuZCQYpFVIAuCPD8r7/
ACwWw0o6ROrTikWQGTyKWNGL7WHnv02P5EuoBMqeJbEWQX6E3FrYFQlr6vFuFV
N7npexPXfz7duuOEitIVkRmBEPMPisbA2O9j1DYKBhLwkuz08s1mABN9V9zfY3sf7YBlj
zllL5jTi63HNp7FfQ29b+XQ7Y6v8AvtcV2MyhpFJPTQxuL9bde2+18bQzEsOUNN0D9SO
pN+ny/XefoD//2Q\x3d\x3d';var
ii=['dimg_lp0_aYLQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_15'];_setImageSrc(ii,s);})();(function(){var
eid='rhs_csi';var pd=-1;(function(a){function b(){google.c.maft(d,c)}var
e=Date.now(),c=document.getElementById(a);if(c){var d=(a=c.getAttribute("lta"))?
Number(a):e;google.c.wpr?google.c.q("prs",function(){typeof pd!
=="undefined"&&pd>=0?setTimeout(b,pd):b()}:b())(eid,!1);})();.BBwThe{font-
weight:700}.k1U36b{font-size:12px;font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
weight:500;line-height:16px}.ApHyTb{font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
size:12px;line-height:16px;letter-spacing:0}.YrbPuc{color:var(--lXoxUe);font-
family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-size:14px;font-weight:400;line-
height:22px}.oPWl9c{color:var(--lXoxUe);font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
size:12px;font-weight:400;line-height:20px}.BjWz4c{color:var(--lXoxUe);font-
family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-size:12px;font-weight:400;line-
height:16px}.cj1ht{color:var(--bbQxAb);font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-
size:12px;font-weight:400;line-height:16px}.TBC9ub{margin-left:0px;margin-
right:0px}.eJtrMc{padding-bottom:8px;padding-
top:8px}.EXH1Ce{position:relative}.CJHX3e{padding-bottom:12px;padding-
top:12px}.XbQ34c{margin-left:auto}.KYaZsb:hover:has(.wL7MCd:hover).ZxS7Db{text-
decoration:none}.iwY1Mb{height:0;width:0;opacity:0;display:block}.KLEmSd{border-
bottom:1px solid var(--ONhrGd)}.wgbRNB.T9Wh5:hover g-fab{color:#70757a!
important;box-shadow:0 0 0 1px rgba(0,0,0,.04),0 4px 8px 0
rgba(0,0,0,.2)}.wgbRNB.T9Wh5{height:36px;width:36px;opacity:1}.wgbRNB.T9Wh5.pQX
cHc,.wgbRNB.T9Wh5.pQXcHc:hover{opacity:0}.bCwll.T9Wh5 g-fab,.VdehBf.T9Wh5 g-
fab{cursor:pointer;height:36px;width:36px}.bCwll.T9Wh5{left:-18px}.VdehBf.T9Wh5{right

```

:-18px}@media (max-width:683px)
{.bCwll.T9Wh5{left:-8px}.VdehBf.T9Wh5{right:-7px}}.VMiiT{font-size:14px;line-
height:22px;font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;color:var(--bbQxAb)}.dMCtttd{font-
size:12px;line-height:16px;font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;letter-
spacing:.1px;color:var(--bbQxAb)}.ovklQ svg{transform:rotate(45deg)}.DfMusf{border-
radius:16px}.yG4QQe{margin-top:0px}.H9lube{background-color:var(--
XKMDxc);border:1px solid var(--mXZkqc);border-radius:50%;display:inline-flex;justify-
content:center;align-items:center;height:26px;width:26px;margin-right:12px;flex-
shrink:0;vertical-align:middle;}.eqA2re.NjwKYd{margin-right:0}.lWIVCe{border-
radius:50%}.ULSxyf{margin-bottom:44px}g-section-with-header{display:block;margin-
bottom:0}.Jb0Zif g-section-with-header{margin-bottom:30px}.ss6qqb g-section-with-
header{margin-bottom:16px}.e2BEnf{font-size:20px;line-height:1.3}.sOq4Gc{white-
space:normal}.jUUgH{display:flex;justify-content:flex-start;align-
items:center}.m5t0v{margin:0 0 16px
0}.XNfAUb{display:block;position:relative;}.RyIFgf{display:block;overflow-x:auto;overflow-
y:clip;position:relative;transform:translate3d(0,0,0);transform:translate3d(0,0,0);}.RyIFgf::
-webkit-
scrollbar{display:none}.HG5ZQb{display:flex}.Bl6f6d{display:flex;}.dRzkFf{margin-
left:20px;padding:0;width:204px}.dRzkFf.dz3f7e{margin-
left:0}.tPUpmf{height:100%;display:flex;flex-direction:column;overflow:hidden}@media
(forced-colors:active){.ar9V1{border:1px solid transparent}}.YXe3R{background-
color:var(--XKMDxc)}.JJJtgd{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-
grow:1;position:relative}.BRBF4d{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-
grow:1;position:relative}.MBOAae{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-
grow:1}.fZPPvd{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-
grow:1;gap:8px;padding:12px}.T16mof{overflow:hidden;position:relative}.AZJdrc,.Svi2ld{
position:relative}.AZJdrc.zGXzeb,.AZJdrc.zGXzeb .Svi2ld{display:table}.AZJdrc.aQElvf,.
AZJdrc.aQElvf .Svi2ld{width:100%;height:100%}.kCyj6d{overflow:hidden;isolation:isolat
e}.Llna9b,.AZJdrc.kSFuOd,.AZJdrc.aQElvf.rlRoqf{position:absolute;top:0;left:0;bottom:
0;right:0}.Llna9b{overflow:hidden;border-
radius:inherit}.WVV5ke{display:contents}.hXY9cf{cursor:pointer;outline-offset:1px;z-
index:1}.rkqHyd{margin:6px
8px}.rkqHyd{margin:8px}.c8rnLc{position:absolute;bottom:0;left:0}.zCaigb{border-
radius:10px;padding-block:2px;padding-inline:8px}.zCaigb{display:flex}.JHVnQc{margin-
block:auto;margin-left:2px;margin-right:5px}.flgn0c{background-color:var(--
gVUKcd);color:var(--EoKObe);fill:var(--
EoKObe)}.Vtx8Xc{position:absolute;top:0;right:0}.jrwKTb{background-color:var(--
gVUKcd);border-radius:50%;color:var(--EoKObe);width:14px;height:14px;line-
height:14px;padding:3px}.jrwKTb span{display:block}.WlydOe{outline-
width:1px;display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;}.WlydOe: hover{text-
decoration:none}.WlydOe: focus-visible{outline-style:solid}.jyAf5b{outline-offset:-1px}
a: hover .WZaQJf{text-decoration:underline}.eAaXgc{display:-webkit-box;-webkit-box-
orient:vertical;overflow:hidden;white-space:normal}.pontCc{flex-
grow:1}.WZaQJf.WZaQJf{color:var(--JKqx2)}
a:visited .WZaQJf,a:visited.WZaQJf,a:visited.WZaQJf.WZaQJf{color:#681da8}.rbYSKb{c

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olor:var(--lXoxUe);line-height:16px;position:absolute;width:calc(100% - 32px);margin:0 16px;font-size:14px;}.LfVVr.rbYSKb{max-width:100%;width:fit-content;margin:0}.esJEyb.LfVVr.rbYSKb{position:unset}.fwjiQe{font-size:12px}.XskEbd{max-width:calc(100% - 36px)}.UzAMof{display:flex;position:relative;flex-wrap:wrap;align-items:center}.Qg3N7d{flex:1;min-width:0;margin-left:8px;width:100%}.sTl1Td{font-size:14px;line-height:20px;align-items:center;letter-spacing:0.1px;color:var(--YLNHc);order:0;align-self:stretch;flex-grow:0;white-space:nowrap}.GoMAhb.GoMAhb{font-size:12px;line-height:16px}.q0qyN.q0qyN{margin-left:6px}.g0GqPe.g0GqPe{font-size:11px;line-height:13px;letter-spacing:0}.aJmABe{color:var(--bbQxAb)}.jSP0zb{margin-left:12px}.K3v1ae{align-self:center}.zT2yKd{-webkit-text-size-adjust:none;margin-bottom:2px;vertical-align:middle;position:relative;display:inline-block;vertical-align:middle}.uiglJd{overflow:hidden;border-radius:50%;position:relative}.NffHwb{position:absolute;bottom:-4px;right:-4px;border-radius:50%;line-height:0;padding:2px;background-color:var(--xhUGwc)}.YXe3R.NffHwb{background-color:var(--XKMDxc)}.hor8Kd{position:relative;border-radius:50%;overflow:hidden}.tBMkq{height:20px;width:20px;line-height:20px}.appd0{font-size:12px;line-height:16px;letter-spacing:0.1px;color:var(--lXoxUe);flex:none;order:2;flex-grow:1;white-space:nowrap}.g1y0jd{align-items:center;color:var(--lXoxUe);cursor:pointer;display:flex;justify-content:center;position:absolute;right:0;vertical-align:middle;z-index:1}.cVxV7d.g1y0jd{bottom:0;}.iwpdc{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;position:relative}.XmLgGb{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1}.koZ5uc{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;gap:8px;padding-bottom:12px;padding-left:12px;padding-right:12px;padding-top:12px}.eAaXgc{display:-webkit-box;-webkit-box-orient:vertical;overflow:hidden;white-space:normal;word-break:break-word}.Wgws3{flex-grow:1}.qgdis{color:var(--bbQxAb);font-weight:bold;}.wXEDqf{border:0;clip:rect(0 0 0 0);height:1px;margin:-1px;overflow:hidden;padding:0;position:absolute;width:1px}.oRVWZ{border-radius:50%;display:flex;align-items:center;justify-content:center;width:fit-content}.CZ61cb.GB3ilc,.GB3ilc{background-color:#f1f3f4}.pQXcHc{cursor:default;opacity:0;visibility:hidden}.EQOGhe{user-select:none}.BzHTJf.p8Jhnd{margin-top:0 !important;margin-bottom:0 !important}.wOJCge{align-items:center;display:flex;text-align:left}.nmhWwf{display:-webkit-box;-webkit-line-clamp:1;-webkit-box-orient:vertical;width:100%}.APjcld,.WltAjf{color:var(--lXoxUe)}.WltAjf::before{content:"";display:block;height:4px}.APjcld,.WltAjf{-webkit-line-clamp:1}.CC4Ctb.JCzEY{-webkit-line-clamp:1;word-break:break-all}.fZPPvd{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;gap:8px;padding-bottom:12px;padding-left:12px;padding-right:12px}g-image-section{display:block}g-card-section{display:block}.MmMlvd{-webkit-tap-highlight-color:transparent;cursor:pointer;display:block;line-height:18px;text-overflow:ellipsis;white-space:nowrap;padding:16px;padding-top:0;margin-

top:24px;position:relative}.MmMlvd.TOQyFc{margin-top:0}.MmMlvd.p8FEIf{padding-bottom:0}.jRKCud.p8FEIf::before{bottom:-4px}.jRKCud::before{bottom:12px;content:"";left:16px;position:absolute;right:16px;top:-4px}.ZFiwCf{display:flex;align-items:center;justify-content:center;position:relative;margin:0 auto;width:100%;border-radius:18px;outline:1px solid transparent;background-color:#f1f3f4;font-size:14px;font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;line-height:20px;font-weight:500;max-width:372px;min-height:40px;border-radius:20px;}@media (forced-colors:active){.ZFiwCf{border:1px solid transparent}}.TQc1id.ZFiwCf{max-width:unset}.ZFiwCf:hover{background-color:#e0e2e3}.Bi9oQd{background-color:var(--gS5jXb);margin-top:18px;position:absolute;border:0;height:1px;left:0;width:100%;margin-top:20px}.TQc1id.Bi9oQd{display:none}.w2fKdd.svg{width:auto}.w2fKdd{color:var(--amnPwe)}.LGwnxb{-webkit-line-clamp:1;word-break:break-all;width:auto;padding-left:0;padding-right:8px;color:#202124;max-width:calc(100% - 64px)}.LGwnxb.empty{padding-right:0}.LGwnxb span,.LGwnxb div{overflow:hidden;text-overflow:ellipsis;white-space:nowrap;width:auto}.PBBEhf{display:unset}.vtSz8d{overflow:visible;box-shadow:none;border:none;margin-top:0;margin-bottom:46px}div.ULSxyf:first-of-type.vtSz8d{margin-top:11px}.UjLRDc{padding-bottom:12px;top:-2px;height:26px}.Dk6Uvb{padding-bottom:8px}.Ea5p3b{position:relative;padding-bottom:0}.PYmpec{background:transparent;border-radius:0;border:unset;pointer-events:none;position:absolute;transform-origin:top;width:calc(100% - 2px);height:100%;z-index:1}.sHEJob{border-top:1px solid var(--ONhrGd);position:relative}.bQwQK{position:relative;top:0;z-index:2;height:30px}.TiWptf{padding-top:6px}.br9Dhb{margin-bottom:-16px}@media (max-width:440px){.TiWptf{margin:10px 0}}.X4T0U{flex-direction:column;display:flex;position:relative}.ieF8rd{padding-bottom:12px;position:relative}.ieF8rd a:hover{color:var(--JKqx2)}.ZVgUme{margin-top:0}#rcnt.KYazsb a:hover{text-decoration:none}.KYazsb{flex:1;display:flex;flex-direction:row-reverse;height:fit-content;padding:12px 0;transition:height 0.3s}.Q6qD5e{position:absolute;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;display:flex;height:100%;pointer-events:none}.ANO7Pc{display:flex;position:relative;pointer-events:none}.zR3ind{position:relative;left:14px;bottom:1px;pointer-events:all}.BKIXrc{pointer-events:none;height:40px}.ObbMBf,.ObbMBf.rIRoqf{display:inherit;flex:inherit;flex-direction:inherit;flex-grow:inherit;text-decoration:inherit;min-width:0}.V5XKdd{flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;justify-content:space-between;box-sizing:border-box;display:flex;padding-left:20px;height:100%;overflow:hidden}.ZxS7Db{display:flex;align-items:start}.V5XKdd:hover.ZxS7Db{text-decoration:underline}.QOGdqf{-webkit-box-orient:vertical;-webkit-line-clamp:2;display:-webkit-box;overflow:hidden;white-space:unset}.ZtihLe{margin-top:0}.Foqdsf{display:flex;flex-grow:1;align-self:flex-end}.Sg4azc{display:block;max-width:100%;overflow:hidden;text-overflow:ellipsis;white-

space:nowrap}.sPQk9b{pointer-events:none;opacity:0}.t7VAxe{border-radius:8px}.Ylm8Fc{left:50%;line-height:0;position:absolute;top:50%;transform:translate(-50%,-50%)}.Ylm8Fc.YmeD8e{margin-top:-6px}.MfcGr{fill:var(--gVUKcd)}.Nci3Ge{fill:var(--EoKObe)}.wNifxf{position:relative;font-family:Roboto,Arial,sans-serif}.LrlhO{color:var(--bbQxAb);font-size:14px;line-height:20px}.LrlhO.p4wth{line-height:20px}.qCr3Hd{display:-webkit-box;overflow:hidden;-webkit-box-orient:vertical;-webkit-line-clamp:2;}.vwPXuf{word-break:normal}.Tu1FGd.kBE71d{padding-top:4px;padding-bottom:16px}.GGYY2b{margin:0;position:relative;}.KMEEs{cursor:pointer;width:320px}.kBE71d{display:flex;height:24px}.oNDBgf{flex-shrink:0;height:24px;margin-right:16px;overflow:hidden;position:relative;width:54px}.xyx7N{border-radius:4px;background-color:rgba(0,0,0,.12);left:0;position:absolute;top:0}.lxWQgb{left:6px;position:absolute;top:0;background-color:#bdc1c6}.wjHqcd{left:12px;position:absolute;top:0;background-color:#e8eaed}.hxOo3{border-radius:4px}.gCzg7e{outline:2px solid var(--xhUGwc)}.fADdd{overflow:hidden;width:42px;height:24px}.XQD50b{border-radius:4px;background-color:#000;height:24px;position:absolute;width:42px}.a1lYzc{left:0;top:0;opacity:3%}.egm4nd{display:inline-flex;gap:16px;position:absolute;padding-right:40px}.zKugA{flex:1}.ZU8Abc{font-weight:500;color:var(--YLNNHc);font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;display:flex;align-items:center;letter-spacing:0.1px;line-height:20px;font-size:14px}.zFcCq{color:var(--amnPwe)}.PF3Cg{display:inline}.TtgB3{display:none}@media (max-width:418px){.PF3Cg{display:none}.TtgB3{display:inline}}.eMLgL{font-size:12px;color:var(--IXoxUe);top:0;height:16px;position:relative;margin-right:0;margin-top:-8px}.U48fD{-webkit-tap-highlight-color:transparent;cursor:pointer;display:block;line-height:18px;text-overflow:ellipsis;white-space:nowrap;padding:16px;padding-top:0;margin-top:16px;position:relative}.TQc1id.U48fD{margin-top:16px}.U48fD.TOQyFc{margin-top:0}.U48fD.p8FEIf{padding-bottom:0}a.jRKCud:hover{text-decoration:none}.yaX1fe{display:flex;white-space:nowrap}.yaX1fe.Zv9led{font-weight:500}.yaX1fe.nZ1RBb{color:var(--IXoxUe);display:inline-block;white-space:nowrap}.Zv9led:hover{text-decoration:underline}.yaX1fe.OtFxD{color:var(--IXoxUe)}.yaX1fe.pW8op{color:var(--IXoxUe)}.RTaUke{display:none;opacity:0}.olk2Cb{margin:0}.y6Uyqe{padding:6px 0 0 0;width:100%;}.Elaa9b{display:flex;column-gap:16px;flex-wrap:wrap}.AJLUJb{display:flex;flex:1;flex-direction:column;min-width:233px}.b2Rnsc{display:flex;height:52px;margin:4px 0 4px 0}.vlifob{align-items:center;background:#f7f8f9;border-radius:8px;justify-content:center;}.vlifob:hover{background-color:#e0e2e3}.qR29te{display:flex;flex-direction:column;flex-grow:1;min-width:0}.B2VR9{display:flex;align-items:center}.ggLgoc{display:block}.wyccme{min-width:0;display:flex;flex-direction:column;justify-content:center;flex-grow:1;overflow:hidden}.ngTNI{text-decoration:none}.ngTNI:hover{text-decoration:none}.ngTNI:focus-visible{outline-color:var(--Pa8Wlb);outline-offset:2px;outline-width:2px}.oatEtb{align-

items:center;display:flex;gap:12px;justify-content:space-between;margin-left:16px;padding-right:9px}.mtv5bd{display:flex;height:100%;flex-direction:column;max-width:100%}.dg6jd{color:#1f1f1f;-webkit-line-clamp:2;overflow-wrap:break-word;font-family:Google Sans,Roboto,Arial,sans-serif;font-size:16px;}.dg6jd span{font-weight:700;}.DxHbyd{background-color:transparent;align-items:center;border-radius:50%;display:flex;height:20px;justify-content:center;margin-right:8px;padding-left:9px;padding-right:7px;width:20px}.yiwlZe{color:#747878;display:block}.AaVjTc a:link{display:block;color:#4285f4;font-weight:normal}.AaVjTc td{padding:0;text-align:center}.YyVfkd{color:var(--YLNNHc);font-weight:normal;overflow:hidden}.AaVjTc{margin:30px auto 30px}.UUoiQc,.LLNLxf{max-width:calc(100vw - 32px - 335px + 55px);min-width:84px;overflow:hidden}@media (max-width:484px){.mYW5bd .NKTSme:nth-child(11),.RcEbob .NKTSme:nth-child(2){display:none}}@media (max-width:464px){.mYW5bd .NKTSme:nth-child(10),.RcEbob .NKTSme:nth-child(3){display:none}}@media (max-width:359px){.mYW5bd .NKTSme:nth-child(9),.RcEbob .NKTSme:nth-child(4){display:none}}@media (max-width:339px){.mYW5bd .NKTSme:nth-child(8),.RcEbob .NKTSme:nth-child(5){display:none}}.SJajHc{background:url(/images/nav_logo321_hr.webp) no-repeat;background-size:167px;overflow:hidden;background-position:0 0;height:40px;display:block}.NVbCr{cursor:pointer}.oeN89d{clear:both}.LLNLxf .oeN89d{float:right}.oeN89d{text-wrap:nowrap}Sufism | Definition, History, Beliefs, Significance, & FactsBritannica<https://www.britannica.com> > ... > Religious BeliefsBritannica<https://www.britannica.com> > ... > Religious BeliefsOct 28, 2025 — Sufism, mystical Islamic belief and practice in which Muslims seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal ...Mysticism, Poetry, SpiritualitySufismSymbolism in SufismTheosophical SufismWhat is Sufism?The Threshold Society<https://sufism.org> > sufismThe Threshold Society<https://sufism.org> > sufismOct 2, 2023 — Sufism is a spiritual path based on the principles expressed in the Holy Qur'an and embodied in the character of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.What people are saying7:08Nikhil Kamath ClipsYouTube·Nov 27, 2025AR Rahman Explains “Sufism” In The Simplest WayYouTube·Nikhil Kamath Clips·Nov 27, 2025YouTubeAR Rahman Explains “Sufism” In The Simplest Way43.7K+ views · 2 weeks agoNikhil Kamath ClipsYouTubeReturning to Islam through Sufism, but struggling with Quranism, Hadith, and translations — anyone relate? Popular comment · There is no issue with the hadith and how our traditional scholars and even sufis have understood and practised them.

The reason why people resort to quranism these days is because they try to approach and understand the hadith without the necessary tools and guidance of a trained teacher. This results in them being confused and misunderstanding the hadith all together. It also does not help that there is a surge of literalist in this age, who take the hadith very literally without context, and apply the hadith that are specific to very general situations and vice versa. This also happens due to approaching the text without the proper tools and guidance of a teacher.

This is why Sufyan bin Uyaynah said:

“Hadith is a cause of deviation except for the jurists.”

If you'd like, let's have a conversation, I can try to address whatever concerns you may

have one by one..40+ comments · 1 week ago/SufismReddit0:58The Eminence of Sayyiduna Siddiq-e-Akbar (رضى الله عنه) | Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri . . . #Abubakar #AbuBakrRA #Companionship #love #MinhajulQuran #DrQadri #ShaykhulIslam #Ideology #IslamicTeachings #Spiritual #Sufism #Peace130+ reactions · 1 day agoTahirulQadriFacebookHonoring Hazrat Abdul Quddoos Gangohi on his Urs, a day to remember his divine wisdom and love for truth. His words light the path of seekers, reminding us that true devotion lies in love, humility and remembrance of Allah.

#Sufinama | #sufism | #sufi | #sufiteachings | #Ursmubarak | #AbdulQuddoosGangohi | 10+ likes · 9 minutes agoSufinama · InstagramSufism platformIbn Taymiyya's views on Sufism were surprisingly balanced. He wrote:

Some people accept everything of Sufism, what is right as well as what is wrong; others reject it totally, both what is wrong and what is right, as some scholars of kalām and fiqh do. The right attitude towards Sufism, or any other thing, is to accept what is in agreement with the Qur'an and the Sunna and reject what is not.

— Ibn Taymiyya, al-Istighātha fī al-radd 'alā al-BakrīOct 14, 2025freemonotheist · XInstructor at Blogging Theology AcademyTorn between Sufism and Shi'ism Popular comment · wa alaykum as salaam, I do not know how you got the impression that Twelver Shia Islam is not about the struggle of the nafs and "spirituality". Have you read these books? Ethics and Spiritual Growth By Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi Lari Self Building By Ibrahim Amini Struggle Of The Self By Sheikh Hur Amili Endorsed By Ayatollah Sistani (Download PDF For Free By Making IMAM-US Account) <https://al-islam.org/jami-al-saadat-collector-felicities-muhammad-mahdi-naraqi> <https://al-islam.org/light-within-me-mutahhari-tabatabai-khomeini> <https://al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol14-n3/islamic-gnosis-irfan-wisdom-hikmat-misbah-yazdi/islamic-gnosis> <https://www.al-islam.org/self-recognition-self-improvement-muhammad-taqi-misbah-yazdi> <https://www.al-islam.org/guide-practical-irfan-mansour-leghaei> Lectures: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_cNkCZjgbk <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGzWe1phOZ4> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHhi6VphKmc> <https://www.al-islam.org/media/irfan-and-sufism-12> To get straight to the point, why do you follow Islam? Because it is the truth or because you follow your own desires? You cannot pick and choose in faith. Sufism is very flawed both in their understanding of Allah swt but also significantly their practices and sunnah. You either accept that the 12 Imams A.S are divine authorities and you take the Sunnah (jurisprudence / fiqh) of the Messenger A.S from them while also rejecting the Sufi practices as innovations. The Holy Messenger A.S nor the Imams A.S ever made "sufi orders". This is how you start innovating and leading astray. Why follow the approach to religion and faith from someone who rejects the Wilayah of the Imams A.S? This is what it all comes down to ultimately. Our approach is rejecting all the falsehoods and upholding that which aligns with the Holy Quran & Sunnah. So of course there are things in the spiritual sense that we have no issue with like self purification, certain aspects of Gnosticism / Mysticism. Heck we even do "group dhikr" but not in the way Sufis do. We read and recite Duas together as a community in the mosque with Duas

like Tawassul, Ashura, Kumayl, Jawshan Kabir, Abu Hamza Thamali amongst hundreds! If you truly take time to indulge in Twelver supplications and recommended deeds and prayers, you will never desire some obscure, unfounded, erroneous practices which its root is false approach to religion and Allah swt. Not every Shia scholar adheres to these Gnosticism concepts because they do not believe it is a required philosophical approach however no Shia rejects spirituality or obtaining God consciousness..50+ comments · 2 weeks ago/shiaReddit1:06 This is TRUE Sufism... Follow for more such advice and reminders.610+ reactions · 1 month ago/sajdahmedumar · FacebookLecturer at AlKauthar Institute1:02 Sufi Mysticism & Practices with Filip Holm (new episode)

This week's podcast guest @itsfiliphholm has a master's degree in Comparative religion and has studied the topic extensively for many years. He brings that experience to Let's Talk Religion to provide a reliable source of information about religion, history & philosophy. Let's Talk Religion is one of the most popular educational Youtube channels and podcasts in the world. Exploring topics ranging from the major religions of the world to small, relatively unknown schools of thought, philosophers and mystics, Filip brings academic rigour and methodology to a topic that is often very oversimplified and misrepresented through entertaining and well produced content.

In this episode we cover the following topics:

Mystical experiences – definition

Mystical path of Sufism

Sufi Mystics

Sufi music – Samaa (listening)

Ecstatic states

Fanaa (annihilation)

Sufi manuals

Ritualised Dhirk – remembrance through recitation of Divine nam170+ likes · 1 week ago/lawofpositivism · InstagramYoga & meditation teacher♥110+ reactions · 1 month ago/Light Of RumiFacebook1:55 Allow things to pass #fyp #foryou #relatable #foryoupage♥♥ #sufism3.7K+ views · 1 day ago/ereko white · TikTokDigital content creatorOnce a sufi was asked, what sufism is?

He said: to feel a joy in heart when sorrow appears...6K+ likes · 1 month ago/mewlana_rumi_poetry · InstagramRumi quote & poetry account#SufiThursdays Sufism is a vast ocean of mystical thought, doctrines, literature and poetry, and a legacy of its saints. The Arabic word tasawwuf means devoting oneself to the contemplation (of Allah) but it is generally used today in the sense of 'a verbal noun meaning the act or process of becoming a Sufi.' It is from this term that the word Sufism is derived.

Read more in my new book (link in bio)

bit.ly/3Lzjxnl

In Search of the Divine: Living Histories of Sufism in India

[hachette_india](https://hachette_india.com/)

#insearchofthedivine #sufism #sufi #dargah #spirituality #tasawwuf #ishq

#silsilah #islam #khanqah #chillahgah #langar #langarkhana #dua #fana
 #baqa #wahdat #wujood #sufipoetry #qawwali #sufikalam #Quran #marifat
 #tariqa #haqeeqat3 weeks agoiamrana · XAuthor of Sufism book(function(){
 (this||self).Bqpk9e=function(f,d,n,e,k,p){var
 g=document.getElementById(f);if(g&&(g.offsetWidth!==0||g.offsetHeight!==0)){var
 l=g.querySelector("div"),h=l.querySelector("div"),a=0;f=Math.max(l.scrollWidth-
 l.offsetWidth,0);if(d>0&&(h=h.children,a=h[d].offsetLeft-h[0].offsetLeft,e)){for(var
 m=a+1;m<d;++m)a+=h[m].offsetWidth;a=Math.min(f,a)}a+=n;d=Math.min(e?f-
 a:a,f);l.scrollLeft=e&&p?a:e&&k?-a:d;var b=g.getElementsByTagName("g-left-button")
 [0],c=g.getElementsByTagName("g-right-button")[0];b&&c&&(e=
 RegExp("\\bHT0l\\b"),k=RegExp("\\bPQXcHc\\
 \\b"),b.className=b.className.replace(e,""),c.className=c.className.replace(e,""),b.
 className=d===0?"PQXcHc
 "+b.className:b.className.replace(k,""),c.className=d===f?"PQXcHc
 "+c.className:c.className.replace(k,""),setTimeout(function(){b.className+="
 tHT0l";c.className+=" tHT0l"},50))}.call(this);(function(){var
 id='_lp0_aYlQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_328';var index=0;var offset=0;var is_rtl=false;var
 is_gecko=false;var is_edge=false;var init='Bqpk9e';window[init]
 (id,index,offset,is_rtl,is_gecko,is_edge);})();Core tenets and spiritual practices. Sufism
 emphasizes divine experience through love, remembrance, and self-purification,
 advocating detachment and inner peace in today's rapidly evolving world.Sufism
 emphasizes divine experience through love, remembrance, and self-purification,
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 is experimental. Learn more0:19In Sufism, belief transcends intellectual assent.It is the
 heart's awakening to the Divine Presence within. Through fana (ego dissolution) and
 ishq (divine love), the seeker transcends duality, recognizing that only the Beloved
 exists. Truth becomes lived experien4.8K+ likes · 4 days agoSufinama · InstagramSufism
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 dimension of Islam that emphasizes direct experience of the Divine through love,
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 offering healing and meditation through melodies, qawwalis, and nasheeds promoting
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a=document.getElementById("Yf1RJc"),b=document.getElementById("center_col");if(a&&b){var c=a.getBoundingClientRect().top-b.getBoundingClientRect().top;document.getElementById("rhs").style.marginTop=c+75+"px"}};}).call(this);})();Choose what you're giving feedback onOr give general feedback
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copiedSend feedback More imagesSufism is a mystic body of religious
practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification,
spirituality, ritualism, and
asceticism.Source: Wikipedia WikipediaMoreLessDescription(function(){var
id='_lp0_aYLQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_90';var cid='_lp0_aYLQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_91';var
nh=1;var b=cid,c=nh;const d=document.getElementById(id),e=d===null?void
0:d.querySelector("#\${b}");var f;if(f=d&&e){const a=e.offsetHeight;if(a===0)f=!1;else{var
g=Number(e.style.getPropertyValue("-webkit-line-clamp"));f=e.scrollHeight<=a+a/
g*(c+.5)}}if(f){let a;(a=d.querySelector("[data-br]"))===null||
a.style.setProperty("display","none");d.setAttribute("expanded","");}});(function(){var
id='_lp0_aYLQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_86';(function(){function t(b,a,d,f,h){var
c=Array.prototype.slice.call(b.querySelectorAll("[data-vdb]"));c.length!
==0&&(c[0].classList.contains(h)&&c.shift(),c.length>3||(b.hasAttribute("data-gr5-init"))||
(c.forEach(function(e){e.classList.contains(f)&&e.setAttribute("data-
tall","1");e.classList.contains(d)?e.setAttribute("data-wide","1"):b.setAttribute("data-gr5-
nw","1"))},b.setAttribute("data-gr5-init","1")),a?(a=!b.hasAttribute("data-gr5-
nw"),c.length===1?c[0].classList.add(d):c.length===2?
(c[0].classList.add(f),c[0].classList.remove(d),c[1].classList.add(f),c[1].classList.remove(
d)):c.length===3&&a&&(c[0].classList.add(f),c[0].classList.remove(d),c[1].classList.add(
f),c[1].classList.remove(d),c[2].classList.remove(f),c[2].classList.add(d)):c.forEach(funci
on(e){e.hasAttribute("data-wide")?
e.classList.add(d):e.classList.remove(d);e.hasAttribute("data-tall")?
e.classList.add(f):e.classList.remove(f)}))}}var u=document.getElementById(id);
(function(b){if(b){var a=b.querySelector("[data-ocn="1"]);if(a){var
d=a.classList[0],f=a.classList[1],h=a.classList[2],c=a.classList[3],e=a.classList[4],A=a.cla
ssList[5],B=a.classList[6],C=a.classList[7],D=a.classList[8],J=a.classList[9],K=a.classList
[10],L=a.classList[11],M=a.classList[12],N=a.classList[13],O=a.classList[14],P=a.classLi
st[15],k=b===null?void 0:b.querySelector(". "+c);f=k===null?void
0:k.querySelector(". "+f);var y=b.parentElement;if(k&&y){var Q=f===null?void
0:f.classList.contains(h),E,F=(E=b.querySelector(". "+a.classList[16]))===null?void
0:E.classList.contains(M),v=function(g,r){for(var p=[e,A,B,D],m=0;m<p.length;m++){var
n=p[m];n===r?g.classList.add(n):g.classList.remove(n)}};a=function(){var
g=y.offsetWidth;if(!(g<=0||b.offsetWidth<=0)){var
r=b.closest(". "+K),p=b.closest(". "+J),m=b.hasAttribute("data-rfcl2"),n=!
b.classList.contains(L),q=n&&g<=290,l=n&&g>290&&(g<=598||m),w=n&&!
m&&g>598&&(g<868||p&&!m);p=n&&!m&&!p&&g<1080&&g>=868&&!w;(g=F&&w||
l&&g<398||q&&g<200)?
b.classList.add(C):b.classList.remove(C);b.dataset.nmc=w?"3":l?"2":q?"1":"0";q?
(v(b,e),Q||g?k.classList.add(d):k.classList.remove(d)):!(v(b,A),l&&g?

```
k.classList.add(d):k.classList.remove(d)):w?(v(b,B),k.classList.add(d)):v(b,p?
D:""),k.classList.remove(d));F&&t(b,l,N,O,P);r=y.querySelectorAll("[data-
vdb]");for(q=0;q<r.length;q++)l=r[q],l.offsetWidth<(l.hasAttribute("data-nar")?100:230)?
l.setAttribute("data-rsw","1"):l.removeAttribute("data-
rsw")}};a();window.setTimeout(a,0);window.addEventListener("resize",a)}}}(u);
(function(b){if(b){var a=Array.prototype.slice.call(b.querySelectorAll("div[data-
vist]")),d=[],f=[];a.forEach(function(h){var
c=window.getComputedStyle(h);h=Number(c.getPropertyValue("padding-
top").replace("px",""));c=Number(c.getPropertyValue("line-
height").replace("px",""));d.push(h);f.push(c)});b=function(){a.forEach(function(h,c){var
e=h.closest("div[data-vdb]");e&&(h.offsetHeight>d[c]+f[c]+1?e.setAttribute("data-long-
title","1"):e.removeAttribute("data-long-
title"))}};b();window.addEventListener("resize",b)}}(u);for(var x=u==null?void
0:u.querySelectorAll("[data-uncol]"),z,G=0;G<((z=x)==null?void 0:z.length);G++){var
H=x[G],l=H.closest("[data-
expandable]");l&&(H.scrollHeight<=H.offsetHeight+Number(H.dataset.lh)*1.5&&(delete
l.dataset.collapsed,delete l.dataset.expandable,l.dataset.uncollapsible="1"),delete
H.dataset.uncol)}
(function(b){b.querySelectorAll("[data-nohu]").forEach(function(a){var d=a.closest("[data-
vdb]");d&&(d.dataset.nohu="1",a.dataset.hovt&&(a=d.querySelector("[data-
vist]"))&&(a.addEventListener("mouseenter",function(){delete
d.dataset.nohu}),a.addEventListener("mouseleave",function()
{d.dataset.nohu="1"}))));b.querySelectorAll("[data-yeshu]").forEach(function(a)
{(a=a.closest("[data-vdh]"))&&(a.dataset.yeshu="1"))}}(u);}).call(this);})(); (function()
{var
id='fld_lp0_aYLQF7a7mtkPrJmygQ0_2';document.getElementById(id).setAttribute("lta",
Date.now());})();(function(){var
s='data:image/webp;base64,UklGRroKAABXRUJQVIA4IK4KAAAwNgCdASq5AHcAPq
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This article is about the body of mystical practice. For other uses, see Sufism (disambiguation).

"Sufi" redirects here. For sanctification in Islam, see Tazkiyah.

Part of a series on Islam

Sufism

Ideas

AbdalAl-Insān al-

KāmilBaqaaDervishDhawqFakirFanaHalHaqiqalhsanIrfanIshqKaramatKashfLataifManzil
Ma'rifaMaqamMuridMurshidNafsNūrQalandarQayyumQutbSilsilaSufi cosmologySufi

metaphysicsSufi philosophySufi poetrySufi psychologySalikTazkiahWaliYaqeen
Practices

AnasheedDhikrHaḍraMuraqabahQawwaliSamaWhirlingZiyarat

Sufi orders

AkbariAliansAzeemiaBa

'AlawiBadawiBayramiBektashiBurhaniChishtiDarqawiGalibiHaqqaniHurufildrisiInayatilss
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diNi'matullāhīNaqshbandiNoorbakshiNuqtaviQadiriQalandariRahmaniRifa'iSafaviSadiyy
aSalihyyaSenusiShadhiliSuhrawardiSūlaymaniyeShattariTijaniUwaisiZahabiyaZahediZi
kri

List of sufis

Notable earlyNotable modernSingers

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Sufism (Arabic: **التصوف**, romanized: al-Taṣawwuf) is a mystic body of religious practice found within Islam which is characterized by a focus on Islamic purification, spirituality, ritualism, and asceticism.[1]

Practitioners of Sufism are referred to as "Sufis" (from **صُوفِيّ**, ṣūfīy),[2] and historically typically belonged to "orders" known as *tariqa* (pl. *turuq*) — congregations formed around a grand wali (saint) who would be the last in a chain of successive teachers linking back to Muhammad, with the goal of undergoing *tazkiya* (self purification) and the hope of reaching the spiritual station of *ihsan*.^{[3][4][5]} The ultimate aim of Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by endeavoring to return to their original state of purity and

natural disposition, known as fitra.[6]

Sufism emerged early on in Islamic history, partly as a reaction against the expansion of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) and mainly under the tutelage of Hasan al-Basri. Although Sufis were opposed to dry legalism, they strictly observed Islamic law and belonged to various schools of Islamic jurisprudence and theology.[7] Although the overwhelming majority of Sufis, both pre-modern and modern, remain adherents of Sunni Islam, certain strands of Sufi thought transferred over to the ambits of Shia Islam during the late medieval period.[8] This particularly happened after the Safavid conversion of Iran under the concept of irfan.[8] Important focuses of Sufi worship include dhikr, the practice of remembrance of God. Sufis also played an important role in spreading Islam through their missionary and educational activities.[7]

Despite a relative decline of Sufi orders in the modern era and attacks from fundamentalist Islamic movements (such as Salafism and Wahhabism), Sufism has continued to play an important role in the Islamic world.[9][10] It has also influenced various forms of spirituality in the West and generated significant academic interest.[11][12][13]

Definitions

The Arabic word *tasawwuf* (lit. "Sufism"), generally translated as Sufism, is commonly defined by Western authors as Islamic mysticism.[14][15][16] The Arabic term *Sufi* has been used in Islamic literature with a wide range of meanings, by both proponents and opponents of Sufism.[14] Classical Sufi texts, which stressed certain teachings and practices of the Quran and the *sunnah* (exemplary teachings and practices of the Islamic prophet Muhammad), gave definitions of *tasawwuf* that described ethical and spiritual goals[^{note 1}] and functioned as teaching tools for their attainment. Many other terms that described particular spiritual qualities and roles were used instead in more practical contexts.[14][15]

Some modern scholars have used other definitions of Sufism, such as the "intensification of Islamic faith and practice"[14] and the "process of realizing ethical and spiritual ideals".[15]

The term Sufism was originally introduced into European languages in the 18th century by Orientalist scholars, who viewed it mainly as an intellectual doctrine and literary tradition at variance with what they saw as sterile monotheism of Islam. It was often mistaken as a universal mysticism in contrast to legalistic orthodox Islam.[17] In recent times, historian Nile Green has argued against such distinctions, stating, in the Medieval period Sufism and Islam were more or less the same.[18] In modern scholarly usage, the term serves to describe a wide range of social, cultural, political, and religious phenomena associated with Sufis.[15]

Sufism has been variously defined as "Islamic mysticism",[19][20][21] "the mystical expression of Islamic faith",[22] "the inward dimension of Islam",[23][24] "the

phenomenon of mysticism within Islam",^{[2][25]} the "main manifestation and the most important and central crystallization" of mystical practice in Islam,^{[26][27]} and "the interiorization and intensification of Islamic faith and practice".^[28]

Etymology

The original meaning of *ṣūfī* seems to have been "one who wears wool (*ṣūf*)", and the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* calls other etymological hypotheses "untenable".^{[2][14]} Woolen clothes were traditionally associated with ascetics and mystics.^[2] Al-Qushayri and Ibn Khaldun both rejected all possibilities other than *ṣūf* on linguistic grounds.^[29] Moreover, medieval scholars like Al Biruni believed that the term 'Sufi' gradually evolved from the Greek term σοφός (*sophos*), which means wisdom or knowledge.^[30]

Another explanation traces the lexical root of the word to *ṣafā* (صفاء), which in Arabic means "purity", and in this context another similar idea of *tasawwuf* as considered in Islam is *tazkiyah* (تزكية, meaning: self-purification), which is also widely used in Sufism. These two explanations were combined by the Sufi al-Rudhabari (d. 322 AH), who said, "The Sufi is the one who wears wool on top of purity."^{[31][32]}

Others have suggested that the word comes from the term *Ahl al-Ṣuffa*^[33] ("the people of the *suffah*" or the bench), who were a group of impoverished companions of Muhammad who held regular gatherings of *dhikr*.^[34] One of the most prominent companions among them was Abu Hurayra. These men and women who sat at the Prophet's Mosque are considered by some to be the first Sufis.^{[35][36]}

History

Main article: History of Sufism

Origins

Rabia Basri, one of the earliest female Sufi mystics during the Umayyad Caliphate

Six Sufi masters, c. 1760

The current consensus is that Sufism emerged in the Hejaz, present-day Saudi Arabia, and that it has existed as a practice of Muslims from the earliest days of Islam, even predating some sectarian divides.^[37]

Sufi orders are based on the '*bayah* (Arabic: بَيْعَة, lit. 'pledge') that was given to Muhammad by his companions (*ṣahabah*). By pledging allegiance to Muhammad, the *sahabah* had committed themselves to the service of God.^{[38][39][40]}

Verily, those who give Bay'âh (pledge) to you (O Muhammad) they are giving Bay'âh (pledge) to God. The Hand of God is over their hands. Then whosoever breaks his pledge, breaks it only to his own harm, and whosoever fulfils what he has covenanted with God, He will bestow on him a great reward. — [Translation of Quran 48:10]

Sufis believe that by giving bay'ah (pledging allegiance) to a legitimate Sufi shaykh, one is pledging allegiance to Muhammad; therefore, a spiritual connection between the seeker and Muhammad is established. It is through Muhammad that Sufis aim to learn about, understand and connect with God.[41] Ali is regarded as one of the major figures amongst the sahaba who have directly pledged allegiance to Muhammad, and Sufis maintain that through Ali, knowledge about Muhammad and a connection with Muhammad may be attained. Such a concept may be understood by the hadith, which Sufis regard to be authentic, in which Muhammad said, "I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate." [42] Eminent Sufis such as Ali Hujwiri refer to Ali as having a very high ranking in Tasawwuf. Furthermore, Junayd of Baghdad regarded Ali as sheikh of the principals and practices of Tasawwuf.[43]

Historian Jonathan A.C. Brown notes that during the lifetime of Muhammad, some companions were more inclined than others to "intensive devotion, pious abstemiousness and pondering the divine mysteries" more than Islam required, such as Abu Dharr al-Ghifari. Hasan al-Basri, a tabi', is considered a "founding figure" in the "science of purifying the heart".[44]

Sufism emerged early on in Islamic history,[2] partly as a reaction against the worldliness of the early Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) and mainly under the tutelage of Hasan al-Basri.[37]

Practitioners of Sufism hold that in its early stages of development Sufism effectively referred to nothing more than the internalization of Islam.[45] According to one perspective, it is directly from the Qur'an, constantly recited, meditated, and experienced, that Sufism proceeded, in its origin and its development.[46] Other practitioners have held that Sufism is the strict emulation of the way of Muhammad, through which the heart's connection to the Divine is strengthened.[47]

Later developments of Sufism occurred from people like Dawud Tai and Bayazid Bastami.[48] Early on Sufism was known for its strict adherence to the sunnah, for example it was reported Bastami refused to eat a watermelon because he did not find any proof that Muhammad ever ate it.[49][50] According to the late medieval mystic, the Persian poet Jami,[51] Abd-Allah ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah (died c. 716) was the first person to be called a "Sufi".[29] The term also had a strong connection with Kufa, with three of the earliest scholars to be called by the term being Abu Hashim al-Kufi,[52] Jabir ibn Hayyan and Abdak al-Sufi.[53] Later individuals included Hatim al-Attar, from Basra, and Al-Junayd al-Baghdadi.[53] Others, such as Al-Harith al-Muhasibi and Sari al-Saqati, were not known as Sufis during their lifetimes, but later came to be identified as such due to their focus on tazkiah (purification).[53]

Important contributions in writing are attributed to Uwais al-Qarani, Hasan of Basra, Harith al-Muhasibi, Abu Nasr as-Sarraj and Said ibn al-Musayyib.[48] Ruwaym, from the second generation of Sufis in Baghdad, was also an influential early figure,[54][55] as was Junayd of Baghdad; a number of early practitioners of Sufism were disciples of one

of the two.[56]

Sufi orders

Main articles: Tariqa and List of Sufi orders

Historically, Sufis have often belonged to "orders" known as *tariqa* (pl. *ṭuruq*) – congregations formed around a grand master *wali* who will trace their teaching through a chain of successive teachers back to the Islamic prophet Muhammad.[3]

Within the Sufi tradition, the formation of the orders did not immediately produce lineages of master and disciple. There are few examples before the eleventh century of complete lineages going back to the Prophet Muhammad. Yet the symbolic importance of these lineages was immense: they provided a channel to divine authority through master-disciple chains. It was through such chains of masters and disciples that spiritual power and blessings were transmitted to both general and special devotees.[57]

These orders meet for spiritual sessions (*majalis*) in meeting places known as *zawiyas*, *khanqahs* or *tekke*.^[58]

They strive for *ihsan* (perfection of worship), as detailed in a *hadith*: "Ihsan is to worship Allah as if you see Him; if you can't see Him, surely He sees you."^[59] Sufis regard Muhammad as *al-Insān al-Kāmil*, the complete human who personifies the attributes of Absolute Reality,^[60] and view him as their ultimate spiritual guide.^[61]

Sufi orders trace most of their original precepts from Muhammad through Ali ibn Abi Talib,^[62] with the notable exception of the Naqshbandi order, which traces its original precepts to Muhammad through Abu Bakr.^[63] However, it was not necessary to formally belong to a *tariqa*.^[64] In the Medieval period, Sufism was almost equal to Islam in general and not limited to specific orders.^[65](p24)

Sufism had a long history already before the subsequent institutionalization of Sufi teachings into devotional orders (*tariqa*, pl. *tarīqât*) in the early Middle Ages.^[66] The term *tariqa* is used for a school or order of Sufism, or especially for the mystical teaching and spiritual practices of such an order with the aim of seeking *ḥaqīqah* (ultimate truth). A *tariqa* has a *murshid* (guide) who plays the role of leader or spiritual director. The members or followers of a *tariqa* are known as *murīdīn* (singular *murīd*), meaning "desirous", viz. "desiring the knowledge of knowing God and loving God".^[67]

Over the years, Sufi orders have influenced and been adopted by various Shi'i movements, especially Isma'ilism, which led to the Safaviyya order's conversion to Shia Islam from Sunni Islam and the spread of Twelverism throughout Iran.^[68]

Sufism as an Islamic discipline

Dancing dervishes, by Kamāl ud-Dīn Behzād (c. 1480–1490)

Monar Jonban, a "dancing" monument, built over the grave of the Sufi ascetic Amu Abdullah Suqla in 12th century. A person stands on top and shakes one minaret, causing the second minaret to move with the same oscillation.

Existing in both Sunni and Shia Islam, Sufism is not a distinct sect, as is sometimes erroneously assumed, but a method of approaching or a way of understanding the religion, which strives to take the regular practice of the religion to the "supererogatory level" through simultaneously "fulfilling ... [the obligatory] religious duties"[2] and finding a "way and a means of striking a root through the 'narrow gate' in the depth of the soul out into the domain of the pure arid un-imprisonable Spirit which itself opens out on to the Divinity." [21] Academic studies of Sufism confirm that Sufism, as a separate tradition from Islam apart from so-called pure Islam, is frequently a product of Western orientalism and modern Islamic fundamentalists.[69]

As a mystic and ascetic aspect of Islam, it is considered as the part of Islamic teaching that deals with the purification of the inner self. By focusing on the more spiritual aspects of religion, Sufis strive to obtain direct experience of God by making use of "intuitive and emotional faculties" that one must be trained to use.[66] Tasawwuf is regarded as a science of the soul that has always been an integral part of Orthodox Islam. In his *Al-Risala al-Safadiyya*, ibn Taymiyyah describes the Sufis as those who belong to the path of the Sunna and represent it in their teachings and writings.[citation needed]

Ibn Taymiyya's Sufi inclinations and his reverence for Sufis like Abdul-Qadir Gilani can also be seen in his hundred-page commentary on *Futuh al-ghayb*, covering only five of the seventy-eight sermons of the book, but showing that he considered tasawwuf essential within the life of the Islamic community.[citation needed]

Al-Ghazali narrates in *Al-Munqidh min al-dalal*:

The vicissitudes of life, family affairs and financial constraints engulfed my life and deprived me of the congenial solitude. The heavy odds confronted me and provided me with few moments for my pursuits. This state of affairs lasted for ten years, but whenever I had some spare and congenial moments I resorted to my intrinsic proclivity. During these turbulent years, numerous astonishing and indescribable secrets of life were unveiled to me. I was convinced that the group of Aulia (holy mystics) is the only truthful group who follow the right path, display best conduct and surpass all sages in their wisdom and insight. They derive all their overt or covert behaviour from the illuminating guidance of the holy Prophet, the only guidance worth quest and pursuit.[70]

Formalization of doctrine

A Sufi in Ecstasy in a Landscape. Isfahan, Safavid Persia (c. 1650–1660), LACMA. In the eleventh-century, Sufism, which had previously been a less "codified" trend in Islamic piety, began to be "ordered and crystallized" into orders which have continued until the present day. All these orders were founded by a major Islamic scholar, and some of the largest and most widespread included the Suhrawardiyya (after Abu al-

Najib Suhrawardi [d. 1168]), Qadiriyya (after Abdul-Qadir Gilani [d. 1166]), the Rifa'iyya (after Ahmed al-Rifa'i [d. 1182]), the Chishtiyya (after Moinuddin Chishti [d. 1236]), the Shadiliyya (after Abul Hasan ash-Shadhili [d. 1258]), the Hamadaniyyah (after Sayyid Ali Hamadani [d. 1384]), the Naqshbandiyya (after Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari [d. 1389]).[71] Contrary to popular perception in the West,[72] however, neither the founders of these orders nor their followers ever considered themselves to be anything other than orthodox Sunni Muslims,[72] and in fact all of these orders were attached to one of the four orthodox legal schools of Sunni Islam.[73] Thus, the Qadiriyya order was Hanbali, with its founder, Abdul-Qadir Gilani, being a renowned jurist; the Chishtiyya was Hanafi; the Shadiliyya order was Maliki; and the Naqshbandiyya order was Hanafi. [74] Thus, it is precisely because it is historically proven that "many of the most eminent defenders of Islamic orthodoxy, such as Abdul-Qadir Gilani, Ghazali, and the Sultan Şalāḥ ad-Dīn (Saladin) were connected with Sufism"[75] that the popular studies of writers like Idries Shah are continuously disregarded by scholars as conveying the fallacious image that "Sufism" is somehow distinct from "Islam".[76][75][77] Nile Green has observed that, in the Middle Ages, Sufism more or less was Islam.[65](p24)

Growth of influence

A Mughal miniature dated from the early 1620s depicting the Mughal emperor Jahangir (d. 1627) preferring an audience with Sufi saint to his contemporaries, the Ottoman sultan and the king of England, James I (d. 1625); the picture is inscribed in Persian: "Though outwardly shahs stand before him, he fixes his gazes on dervishes." Historically, Sufism became "an incredibly important part of Islam" and "one of the most widespread and omnipresent aspects of Muslim life" in Islamic civilization from the early medieval period onwards,[78][better source needed] when it began to permeate nearly all major aspects of Sunni Islamic life in regions stretching from India and Iraq to the Balkans and Senegal.[79][better source needed]

The rise of Islamic civilization coincides strongly with the spread of Sufi philosophy in Islam. The spread of Sufism has been considered a definitive factor in the spread of Islam, and in the creation of integrally Islamic cultures, especially in Africa[80] and Asia. The Senussi tribes of Libya and the Sudan are one of the strongest adherents of Sufism. Sufi poets and philosophers such as Khoja Akhmet Yassawi, Rumi, and Attar of Nishapur (c. 1145 – c. 1221) greatly enhanced the spread of Islamic culture in Anatolia, Central Asia, and South Asia.[81][82] Sufism also played a role in creating and propagating the culture of the Ottoman world,[83] and in resisting European imperialism in North Africa and South Asia.[84]

Blagaj Tekke, built c. 1520 next to the Buna wellspring cavern beneath a high vertical karstic cliff, in Blagaj, Mostar, Bosnia. The natural and architectural ensemble, proposed for UNESCO inscription,[85] forms a spatially and topographically self-contained ensemble, and is a National Monument of Bosnia.[86] Between the 13th and 16th centuries, Sufism produced a flourishing intellectual culture

throughout the Islamic world, a "Renaissance" whose physical artifacts survive.[citation needed] In many places a person or group would endow a waqf to maintain a lodge (known variously as a zawiya, khanqah, or tekke) to provide a gathering place for Sufi adepts, as well as lodging for itinerant seekers of knowledge. The same system of endowments could also pay for a complex of buildings, such as that surrounding the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul, including a lodge for Sufi seekers, a hospice with kitchens where these seekers could serve the poor and/or complete a period of initiation, a library, and other structures. No important domain in the civilization of Islam remained unaffected by Sufism in this period.[87]

Modern era

Opposition to Sufi teachers and orders from more literalist and legalist strains of Islam existed in various forms throughout Islamic history. It took on a particularly violent form in the 18th century with the emergence of the Wahhabi movement.[88]

Whirling dervishes of the Mevlevi Order photographed by Pascal Sébah (Istanbul, 1870)
Around the turn of the 20th century, Sufi rituals and doctrines also came under sustained criticism from modernist Islamic reformers, liberal nationalists, and, some decades later, socialist movements in the Muslim world. Sufi orders were accused of fostering popular superstitions, resisting modern intellectual attitudes, and standing in the way of progressive reforms. Ideological attacks on Sufism were reinforced by agrarian and educational reforms, as well as new forms of taxation, which were instituted by Westernizing national governments, undermining the economic foundations of Sufi orders. The extent to which Sufi orders declined in the first half of the 20th century varied from country to country, but by the middle of the century the very survival of the orders and traditional Sufi lifestyle appeared doubtful to many observers.[89][88]

However, defying these predictions, Sufism and Sufi orders have continued to play a major role in the Muslim world, also expanding into Muslim-minority countries. Its ability to articulate an inclusive Islamic identity with greater emphasis on personal and small-group piety has made Sufism especially well-suited for contexts characterized by religious pluralism and secularist perspectives.[88]

In the modern world, the classical interpretation of Sunni orthodoxy, which sees in Sufism an essential dimension of Islam alongside the disciplines of jurisprudence and theology, is represented by institutions such as Egypt's Al-Azhar University and Zaytuna College, with Al-Azhar's current Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb recently defining "Sunni orthodoxy" as being a follower "of any of the four schools of [legal] thought (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki or Hanbali) and ... [also] of the Sufism of Imam Junayd of Baghdad in doctrines, manners and [spiritual] purification." [73]

The relationship of Sufi orders to modern societies is usually defined by their relationship to governments.[90]

Sufi Tanoura twirling in Muizz Street, Cairo

Turkey, Persia and The Indian Subcontinent have all been a center for many Sufi lineages and orders. The Bektashi were closely affiliated with the Ottoman Janissaries and are the heart of Turkey's large and mostly liberal Alevi population. They have spread westwards to Cyprus, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and, more recently, to the United States, via Albania. Sufism is popular in such African countries as Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Morocco, and Senegal, where it is seen as a mystical expression of Islam.[91] Mbacke suggests that one reason Sufism has taken hold in Senegal is because it can accommodate local beliefs and customs, which tend toward the mystical.[92]

The life of the Algerian Sufi master Abdelkader El Djezairi is instructive in this regard. [93] Notable as well are the lives of Amadou Bamba and El Hadj Umar Tall in West Africa, and Sheikh Mansur and Imam Shamil in the Caucasus. In the twentieth century, some Muslims have called Sufism a superstitious religion which holds back Islamic achievement in the fields of science and technology.[94]

A number of Westerners have embarked with varying degrees of success on the path of Sufism. One of the first to return to Europe as an official representative of a Sufi order, and with the specific purpose to spread Sufism in Western Europe, was the Swedish-born wandering Sufi Ivan Aguéli. René Guénon, the French scholar, became a Sufi in the early twentieth century and was known as Sheikh Abdul Wahid Yahya. His manifold writings defined the practice of Sufism as the essence of Islam, but also pointed to the universality of its message. Spiritualists, such as George Gurdjieff, may or may not conform to the tenets of Sufism as understood by orthodox Muslims.[95]

Sufi orders

Silsila

This chart explains the spiritual chain (silsila) of major Sufi orders and their connection to the Prophet Muhammad.[66]

Note: This chart is intended to help illustrate how spiritual masters are connected through the lineage. To keep it less cluttered, the names of intermediate spiritual masters have been omitted. For a detailed lineage of the spiritual orders, please visit their respective pages.

Sufi Order

Prophet Muhammad

d. 632

Abu Bakr

d. 634

d. 644

d. 656

Uthman

Umar

Ali

d. 661

Salman the Persian

d. 653

d. 680

d. 670

d.728

Husayn ibn Ali

Hasan ibn Ali

Hasan al Basri

Imam Jafar Sadiq

Habib al-Ajami

Abd al-Wahid ibn Zaid

Ahmad al-Rifa'i

(Rifa'i Sufi Order)

Bayazid Bastami

Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad

Maruf Karkhi

Ibrahim al-Desuqi

(Burhaniyya Sufi Order)

Ahmad al-Badawi

(Badawiyyah Sufi Order)

Abu al-Hassan al-Kharaqani

Sari al-Saqati

Abdullah Shattar

(Shattariyya Sufi Order)

Ibrahim ibn

Adham

Yusuf Hamadani

Junayd Baghdadi

Abdul Khaliq Ghijduwani

(Khwajagan Sufi Order)

Zahed

Gilani

(Zahediyya Sufi Order)

Ahmad Yasawi

(Yasawiya Sufi Order)

Abu Bakr al-Shibli

Abu Al-Rudbari

Mumshad Al-Dinawari

Bahauddin Naqshband

(Naqshbandi Sufi Order)

Umar Khalwati

(Khalwati Sufi Order)

Safi-ad-Din Ardabili

(Safaviyya Sufi Order)

Haji Bektash Veli

(Bektashi Sufi Order)

Abu Bakr Nassaj Tusi

Abu Ishaq Shami Chishti

Abu Madyan

(Madyani Sufi Order)

Khwaja Ahrar

(Ahrari Sufi Order)

Hajji

Bayram

(Bayrami Sufi Order)

Abdul Qadir

Gilani

(Qadiri Sufi Order)

Ahmad Ghazali

Muinuddin Chishti

(Chishti Sufi Order)

Mujaddid Alf Sani

(Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi Sufi Order)

Ameer Abul Ula

(Naqshbandi-Abul Ulai Sufi Order)

Abd al-Salam ibn Mashish

Abu al-Najib Suhrawardi

Qutbuddin Bakhtiar Kaki

Khâlid-i Shahrâzuri

(Naqshbandi-Khalidiyya Sufi Order)

Munim Pak

(Munemi Sufi Order)

Ahmad al Tijani

(Tijani Sufi Order)

Shah Barkatullah Marehrwi

(Barkaatiyah Sufi Order)

Al-Shadhili

(Shadhili Sufi Order)

Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi

(Suhrawardiyya Sufi Order)

Najm al-Din Kubra

(Kubrawiya Sufi Order)

Nizamuddin Auliya

(Chishti-Nizami Sufi Order)

Alauddin Sabir

Kaliyari

(Chishti-Sabiri Sufi Order)

Khizr Rumi

Qalandar

(Chishti-Khizri Sufi Order)

Nazim Al-Haqqani

(Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi Order Sufi Order)

Ahmad Raza Khan

(Razviyah Sufi Order)

Muhammad al Wafa

(Wafai Sufi Order)

Jalaluddin Rumi

(Mevlevi Sufi Order)

Shaikh Badruddin Samarkandi

(Firdausiya Sufi Order)

Ashraf Jahangir Semnani

(Ashrafi Sufi Order)

Ahmad Zarruq

(Zarruqi Sufi Order)

Muhammad al-Arabi al-Darqawi

(Darqawiyya Sufi Order)

Spiritual Chain of Major Sufi Orders

1. QADIRIYYA

Shaykh Abdul Qadir al-Jilani → Shaykh Abū Saʿīd al-Mukharramī → Shaykh Abū al-Ḥasan al-Qurashī (al-Ḥakkārī) → Shaykh Abū al-Faraj al-Ṭarsūsī → Shaykh ʿAbd al-Wāḥid al-Tamīmī → Shaykh ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Tamīmī → Shaykh Abū Bakr al-Shiblī → Shaykh al-Junayd al-Baghdādī → Shaykh al-Sarī al-Saqatī → Shaykh Maʿrūf al-Karkhī → Imam ʿAlī al-Riḍā → Imam Mūsā al-Kāẓim → Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq → Imam Muḥammad al-Bāqir → Imam Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn → Imam al-Ḥusayn → Imam ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

2. CHISHTI[96] [97]

Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti → Khwāja ʿUthmān Harvānī → Ḥājī Sharīf Zindānī → Muḥammad Maudūd Chishtī → Abū Yūsuf Chishtī → Abū Muḥammad ibn Abī Aḥmad → Abū Aḥmad ʿAbdāl Chishtī → Abū Ishāq Shāmī Chishtī → Mamshād ʿUlw Dīnawarī → Amīnuddīn Abū Hubayrah Baṣrī → Saʿduddīn Huḍhayfah Marʿashī → Ibrāhīm ibn Adham al-Balkhī → Fuḍayl ibn ʿIyāḍ → ʿAbd al-Wāḥid ibn Zayd → al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī → ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

3. NAQSHBANDI

Baha' al-din Naqshband → Sayyid Amīr Kulāl → Muḥammad Bābā Sammāsī → ʿAlī Rāmītānī (Azīzān) → Maḥmūd Anjīr Faghnavī → ʿĀrif Riwgārī → ʿAbd al-Khālīq Ghujduwānī → Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf al-Hamadānī → Abū ʿAlī al-Farmadī al-Ṭūsī → Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī al-Kharaqānī → Abū Yazīd al-Bisṭāmī → Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq → Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr → Salmān al-Fārisī → Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

4. SUHRAWARDI[98]

Shihab ad-din Suhrawardi → Abū Najīb ʿAbd al-Qādir Suhrawardī → Khwāja Aḥmad Ghazzālī → Shaykh Abū Bakr Nisāj → Shaykh Abū al-Qāsim Gurgānī → Khwāja Usmān Maghribī → Shaykh Abū ʿAlī Kātib → Shaykh Abū ʿAlī Rudhbārī → Imām Junayd Baghdādī → Sarī Saqatī → Maʿrūf Karkhī → Dāwūd Ṭāʾī → Ḥabīb al-ʿAjamī → al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī → ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

5. KUBRAWIYA[98]

Najm ad-Dīn Kubrā → Shaykh Rūzbahān Baqlī → Khwāja ʿAmmār Yāsir → Shaykh Abū Najīb Suhrawardī → Khwāja Aḥmad Ghazzālī → Shaykh Abū Bakr Nisāj → Shaykh Abū al-Qāsim Gurgānī → Khwāja Usmān Maghribī → Shaykh Abū ʿAlī Kātib → Shaykh Abū ʿAlī Rudhbārī → Imām Junayd Baghdādī → Sarī Saqatī → Maʿrūf Karkhī → Dāwūd Ṭāʾī → Ḥabīb al-ʿAjamī → al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī → ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

6. SHADHILI

Nūriddīn Abū al-Ḥasan al-Shādhilī → ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Mashīsh → ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Madanī → Taqīuddīn al-Ṣūfī → Fakhriddīn → Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī → Tājuddīn → Shamsuddīn → Zaynuddīn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī → Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm al-Baṣrī → Abū

al-Qāsim Mirwānī → Abū Muḥammad Saʿīd → Abū Muḥammad Saʿd → Fātiḥ al-Masʿūdī → Saʿīd al-Qirwānī → Abū Muḥammad Jābir → Imām al-Ḥasan → ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

7. RIFA'I

Sayyid Aḥmad ar-Rifāʿī → Sayyid Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī ar-Rifāʿī → Sayyid Yaḥyā Naqīb → Sayyid Thābit → Sayyid ʿAlī Hāzim Abū al-Fawāris → Sayyid Abū ʿAlī al-Murtaḍā → Sayyid Abū al-Faḍāʾil → Sayyid Abū al-Makārim al-Ḥasan → Sayyid al-Mahdī al-Makkī → Sayyid Muḥammad Abū al-Qāsim → Sayyid Ḥasan Qāsim Abū Mūsā → Sayyid Abū ʿAbdullāh Ḥusayn → Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣāliḥ al-Akbar → Sayyid Mūsā Sānī → Sayyid Ibrāhīm al-Murtaḍā → Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim → Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq → Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir → Imām Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn → Imām al-Ḥusayn → ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib → Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ

Aims and objectives

The Tomb of Shah Rukn-e-Alam (built 1324 A.D) is located in Multan, Pakistan. Known for its multitude of Sufi shrines, Multan is nicknamed as The City of Saints.

While all Muslims believe that they are on the pathway to Allah and hope to become close to God in Paradise—after death and after the Last Judgment—Sufis also believe that it is possible to draw closer to God and to more fully embrace the divine presence in this life.[citation needed] The chief aim of all Sufis is to seek the pleasure of God by working to restore within themselves the primordial state of fitra.[6]

To Sufis, the outer law consists of rules pertaining to worship, transactions, marriage, judicial rulings, and criminal law—what is often referred to, broadly, as "qanun". The inner law of Sufism consists of rules about repentance from sin, the purging of contemptible qualities and evil traits of character, and adornment with virtues and good character.[99]

Teachings

Man holding the hem of his beloved, an expression of a Sufi's agony of longing for the divine union

To the Sufi, it is the transmission of divine light from the teacher's heart to the heart of the student, rather than worldly knowledge, that allows the adept to progress. They further believe that the teacher should attempt inerrantly to follow the Divine Law.[100]

According to Moojan Momen "one of the most important doctrines of Sufism is the concept of al-Insan al-Kamil ("the Perfect Man"). This doctrine states that there will always exist upon the earth a "qutb" (pole or axis of the Universe)—a man who is the perfect channel of grace from God to man and in a state of wilayah (sanctity, being under the protection of Allah). The concept of the Sufi qutb is similar to that of the Shi'i imam.[101][102] However, this belief puts Sufism in "direct conflict" with Shia Islam,

since both the qutb (who for most Sufi orders is the head of the order) and the imam fulfill the role of "the purveyor of spiritual guidance and of Allah's grace to mankind". The vow of obedience to the shaykh or qutb which is taken by Sufis is considered incompatible with devotion to the imam.[101]

As a further example, the prospective adherent of the Mevlevi Order would have been ordered to serve in the kitchens of a hospice for the poor for 1001 days prior to being accepted for spiritual instruction, and a further 1,001 days in solitary retreat as a precondition of completing that instruction.[103]

Some teachers, especially when addressing more general audiences, or mixed groups of Muslims and non-Muslims, make extensive use of parable, allegory, and metaphor. [104] Although approaches to teaching vary among different Sufi orders, Sufism as a whole is primarily concerned with direct personal experience, and as such has sometimes been compared to other, non-Islamic forms of mysticism (e.g., as in the books of Seyyed Hossein Nasr).

Many Sufi believe that to reach the highest levels of success in Sufism typically requires that the disciple live with and serve the teacher for a long period of time.[105] An example is the folk story about Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari, who gave his name to the Naqshbandi Order. He is believed to have served his first teacher, Sayyid Muhammad Baba As-Samasi, for 20 years, until as-Samasi died. He is said to then have served several other teachers for lengthy periods of time. He is said to have helped the poorer members of the community for many years, and after this concluded his teacher directed him to care for animals cleaning their wounds, and assisting them.[106]

Muhammad

His [Muhammad's] aspiration preceded all other aspirations, his existence preceded nothingness, and his name preceded the Pen, because he existed before all peoples. There is not in the horizons, beyond the horizons or below the horizons, anyone more elegant, more noble, more knowing, more just, more fearsome, or more compassionate, than the subject of this tale. He is the leader of created beings, the one "whose name is glorious Ahmad". —Mansur Al-Hallaj[107]

The name of Muhammad in Islamic calligraphy. Sufis believe the name of Muhammad is holy and sacred.

Devotion to Muhammad is the strongest practice within Sufism.[108] Sufis have historically revered Muhammad as the prime personality of spiritual greatness. The Sufi poet Saadi Shirazi stated, "He who chooses a path contrary to that of the prophet shall never reach the destination. O Saadi, do not think that one can treat that way of purity except in the wake of the chosen one." [109] Rumi attributes his self-control and abstinence from worldly desires as qualities attained by him through the guidance of Muhammad. Rumi states, "I 'sewed' my two eyes shut from [desires for] this world and the next – this I learned from Muhammad." [110] Ibn Arabi regards Muhammad as the

greatest man and states, "Muhammad's wisdom is uniqueness (fardiya) because he is the most perfect existent creature of this human species. For this reason, the command began with him and was sealed with him. He was a Prophet while Adam was between water and clay, and his elemental structure is the Seal of the Prophets." [111] Attar of Nishapur claimed that he praised Muhammad in such a manner that was not done before by any poet, in his book the *Ilahi-nama*. [112] Fariduddin Attar stated, "Muhammad is the exemplar to both worlds, the guide of the descendants of Adam. He is the sun of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-seeing eye... The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for him; he is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes." [113] Sufis have historically stressed the importance of Muhammad's perfection and his ability to intercede. The persona of Muhammad has historically been and remains an integral and critical aspect of Sufi belief and practice. [108] Bayazid Bastami is recorded to have been so devoted to the sunnah of Muhammad that he refused to eat a watermelon because he could not establish that Muhammad ever ate one. [114]

In the 13th century, a Sufi poet from Egypt, Al-Busiri, wrote the *al-Kawākib ad-Durriya fī Madḥ Khayr al-Barīya* ('The Celestial Lights in Praise of the Best of Creation'), commonly referred to as *Qaṣīdat al-Burda* ('Poem of the Mantle'), in which he extensively praised Muhammad. [115] This poem is still widely recited and sung amongst Sufi groups and lay Muslims alike all over the world. [115]

Sufi beliefs about Muhammad

According to Ibn Arabi, Islam is the best religion because of Muhammad. [60] Ibn Arabi regards that the first entity that was brought into existence is the reality or essence of Muhammad (*al-ḥaqīqa al-Muhammadiyya*). Ibn Arabi regards Muhammad as the supreme human being and master of all creatures. Muhammad is therefore the primary role model for human beings to aspire to emulate. [60] Ibn Arabi believes that God's attributes and names are manifested in this world and that the most complete and perfect display of these divine attributes and names are seen in Muhammad. [60] Ibn Arabi believes that one may see God in the mirror of Muhammad, meaning that the divine attributes of God are manifested through Muhammad. [60] Ibn Arabi maintains that Muhammad is the best proof of God, and by knowing Muhammad one knows God. [60] Ibn Arabi also maintains that Muhammad is the master of all of humanity in both this world and the afterlife. In this view, Islam is the best religion because Muhammad is Islam. [60]

Sufism and Islamic law

Tomb of Salim Chishti, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra, Uttar Pradesh, India

Sufis believe the sharia (exoteric "canon"), *tariqa* ("order") and *haqiqa* ("truth") are mutually interdependent. [116] Sufism leads the adept, called *salik* or "wayfarer", in his *sulûk* or "road" through different stations (*maqāmāt*) until he reaches his goal, the perfect *tawhid*, the existential confession that God is One. [117] Ibn Arabi says, "When we see someone in this Community who claims to be able to guide others to God, but is

remiss in but one rule of the Sacred Law—even if he manifests miracles that stagger the mind—asserting that his shortcoming is a special dispensation for him, we do not even turn to look at him, for such a person is not a sheikh, nor is he speaking the truth, for no one is entrusted with the secrets of God Most High save one in whom the ordinances of the Sacred Law are preserved. (Jami' karamat al-awliya').[118][119]

It is related, moreover, that Malik, one of the founders of the four schools of Sunni law, was a strong proponent of combining the "inward science" ('ilm al-bātin) of mystical knowledge with the "outward science" of jurisprudence.[120] For example, the famous twelfth-century Maliki jurist and judge Qadi Iyad, later venerated as a saint throughout the Iberian Peninsula, narrated a tradition in which a man asked Malik "about something in the inward science", to which Malik replied: "Truly none knows the inward science except those who know the outward science! When he knows the outward science and puts it into practice, God shall open for him the inward science – and that will not take place except by the opening of his heart and its enlightenment." In other similar traditions, it is related that Malik said: "He who practices Sufism (tasawwuf) without learning Sacred Law corrupts his faith (tazandaqa), while he who learns Sacred Law without practicing Sufism corrupts himself (tafassaqa). Only he who combines the two proves true (tahaqqqa)".[120]

The Amman Message, a detailed statement issued by 200 leading Islamic scholars in 2005 in Amman, specifically recognized the validity of Sufism as a part of Islam. This was adopted by the Islamic world's political and temporal leaderships at the Organisation of the Islamic Conference summit at Mecca in December 2005, and by six other international Islamic scholarly assemblies including the International Islamic Fiqh Academy of Jeddah, in July 2006. The definition of Sufism can vary drastically between different traditions (what may be intended is simple tazkiah as opposed to the various manifestations of Sufism around the Islamic world).[121]

Traditional Islamic thought and Sufism

Tomb of Sayyid Ali Hamadani, Kulob, Tajikistan

Urs of Islamic Naqshbandi saints of Allo Mahar is celebrated on 23 March every year. The literature of Sufism emphasizes highly subjective matters that resist outside observation, such as the subtle states of the heart. Often these resist direct reference or description, with the consequence that the authors of various Sufi treatises took recourse to allegorical language. For instance, much Sufi poetry refers to intoxication, which Islam expressly forbids. This usage of indirect language and the existence of interpretations by people who had no training in Islam or Sufism led to doubts being cast over the validity of Sufism as a part of Islam. Also, some groups emerged that considered themselves above the sharia and discussed Sufism as a method of bypassing the rules of Islam in order to attain salvation directly. This was disapproved of by traditional scholars.

For these and other reasons, the relationship between traditional Islamic scholars and Sufism is complex, and a range of scholarly opinion on Sufism in Islam has been the norm. Some scholars, such as Al-Ghazali, helped its propagation while other scholars opposed it. William Chittick explains the position of Sufism and Sufis this way:

In short, Muslim scholars who focused their energies on understanding the normative guidelines for the body came to be known as jurists, and those who held that the most important task was to train the mind in achieving correct understanding came to be divided into three main schools of thought: theology, philosophy, and Sufism. This leaves us with the third domain of human existence, the spirit. Most Muslims who devoted their major efforts to developing the spiritual dimensions of the human person came to be known as Sufis.[49]

Persian influence on Sufism

Persians played a huge role in developing and systematising Islamic mysticism. One of the first to formalise Sufi principles was Junayd of Baghdad – a Persian from Baghdad. [122] Other great Persian Sufi poets include Rudaki, Rumi, Attar, Nizami, Hafez, Sanai, Shams Tabrizi and Jami.[123] Famous poems that still resonate across the Muslim world include *The Masnavi* of Rumi, *The Bustan* by Saadi, *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar and *The Divān* of Hafez.

Neo-Sufism

The mausoleum (gongbei) of Ma Laichi in Linxia City, China

The term neo-Sufism was originally coined by Fazlur Rahman and used by other scholars to describe reformist currents among 18th century Sufi orders, whose goal was to remove some of the more ecstatic and pantheistic elements of the Sufi tradition and reassert the importance of Islamic law as the basis for inner spirituality and social activism.[13][11] In recent times, it has been increasingly used by scholars like Mark Sedgwick in the opposite sense, to describe various forms of Sufi-influenced spirituality in the West, in particular the deconfessionalized spiritual movements which emphasize universal elements of the Sufi tradition and de-emphasize its Islamic context.[11][12]

Devotional practices

Sufi gathering engaged in dhikr

The devotional practices of Sufis vary widely. Prerequisites to practice include rigorous adherence to Islamic norms (ritual prayer in its five prescribed times each day, the fast of Ramadan, and so forth). Additionally, the seeker ought to be firmly grounded in supererogatory practices known from the life of Muhammad (such as the "sunnah prayers"). This is in accordance with the words, attributed to God, of the following, a famous Hadith Qudsi:

My servant draws near to Me through nothing I love more than that which I have made obligatory for him. My servant never ceases drawing near to Me through supererogatory

works until I love him. Then, when I love him, I am his hearing through which he hears, his sight through which he sees, his hand through which he grasps, and his foot through which he walks.[124]

It is also necessary for the seeker to have a correct creed (aqidah),[125] and to embrace with certainty its tenets.[126] The seeker must also, of necessity, turn away from sins, love of this world, the love of company and renown, obedience to satanic impulse, and the promptings of the lower self. (The way in which this purification of the heart is achieved is outlined in certain books, but must be prescribed in detail by a Sufi master.) The seeker must also be trained to prevent the corruption of those good deeds which have accrued to his or her credit by overcoming the traps of ostentation, pride, arrogance, envy, and long hopes (meaning the hope for a long life allowing us to mend our ways later, rather than immediately, here and now).

Sufi practices, while attractive to some, are not a means for gaining knowledge. The traditional scholars of Sufism hold it as absolutely axiomatic that knowledge of God is not a psychological state generated through breath control. Thus, practice of "techniques" is not the cause, but instead the occasion for such knowledge to be obtained (if at all), given proper prerequisites and proper guidance by a master of the way. Furthermore, the emphasis on practices may obscure a far more important fact: The seeker is, in a sense, to become a broken person, stripped of all habits through the practice of (in the words of Imam Al-Ghazali) solitude, silence, sleeplessness, and hunger.[127]

Dhikr

Main article: Dhikr

The name of Allah as written on the disciple's heart, according to the Sarwari Qadri Order

Dhikr is the remembrance of Allah commanded in the Quran for all Muslims through a specific devotional act, such as the repetition of divine names, supplications and aphorisms from hadith literature and the Quran. More generally, dhikr takes a wide range and various layers of meaning.[128] This includes dhikr as any activity in which the Muslim maintains awareness of Allah. To engage in dhikr is to practice consciousness of the Divine Presence and love, or "to seek a state of godwariness". The Quran refers to Muhammad as the very embodiment of dhikr of Allah (65:10–11). Some types of dhikr are prescribed for all Muslims and do not require Sufi initiation or the prescription of a Sufi master because they are deemed to be good for every seeker under every circumstance.[129]

The dhikr may slightly vary among each order. Some Sufi orders[130] engage in ritualized dhikr ceremonies, or sema. Sema includes various forms of worship such as recitation, singing (the most well known being the Qawwali music of the Indian subcontinent), instrumental music, dance (most famously the Sufi whirling of the Mevlevi order), incense, meditation, ecstasy, and trance.[131]

Some Sufi orders stress and place extensive reliance upon dhikr. This practice of dhikr is called Dhikr-e-Qulb (invocation of Allah within the heartbeats). The basic idea in this practice is to visualize the Allah as having been written on the disciple's heart.[132]

Muraqaba

Main article: Muraqaba

An Algerian Sufi in Murāqabah. La prière ('The Prayer') by Eugène Girardet.

The practice of muraqaba can be likened to the practices of meditation attested in many faith communities.[133] While variation exists, one description of the practice within a Naqshbandi lineage reads as follows:

He is to collect all of his bodily senses in concentration, and to cut himself off from all preoccupation and notions that inflict themselves upon the heart. And thus he is to turn his full consciousness towards God Most High while saying three times: "Ilahî anta maqsûdî wa-ridâka matlûbî—my God, you are my Goal and Your good pleasure is what I seek". Then he brings to his heart the Name of the Essence—Allâh—and as it courses through his heart he remains attentive to its meaning, which is "Essence without likeness". The seeker remains aware that He is Present, Watchful, Encompassing of all, thereby exemplifying the meaning of his saying (may God bless him and grant him peace): "Worship God as though you see Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you". And likewise the prophetic tradition: "The most favored level of faith is to know that God is witness over you, wherever you may be".[134]

Sufi whirling

Main article: Sufi whirling

Whirling Dervishes, at Rumi Fest 2007

Sufi whirling (or Sufi spinning) is a form of Sama or physically active meditation which originated among some Sufis, and practised by the Sufi Dervishes of the Mevlevi order. It is a customary dance performed within the sema, through which dervishes (also called semazens, from Persian سماعزن) aim to reach the source of all perfection, or kemal. This is sought through abandoning one's nafs, egos or personal desires, by listening to the music, focusing on God, and spinning one's body in repetitive circles, which has been seen as a symbolic imitation of planets in the Solar System orbiting the Sun.[135]

As explained by Mevlevi practitioners:[136]

In the symbolism of the Sema ritual, the semazen's camel's hair hat (sikke) represents the tombstone of the ego; his wide, white skirt (tennure) represents the ego's shroud. By removing his black cloak (hırka), he is spiritually reborn to the truth. At the beginning of the Sema, by holding his arms crosswise, the semazen appears to represent the

number one, thus testifying to God's unity. While whirling, his arms are open: his right arm is directed to the sky, ready to receive God's beneficence; his left hand, upon which his eyes are fastened, is turned toward the earth. The semazen conveys God's spiritual gift to those who are witnessing the Sema. Revolving from right to left around the heart, the semazen embraces all humanity with love. The human being has been created with love in order to love. Mevlâna Jalâluddîn Rumi says, "All loves are a bridge to Divine love. Yet, those who have not had a taste of it do not know!"

The traditional view of most orthodox Sunni Sufi orders, such as the Qadiriyya and the Chisti, as well as Sunni Muslim scholars in general, is that dancing with intent during dhikr or whilst listening to Sema is prohibited.[137][138][139][140]

Singing

Kurdish Dervishes practice Sufism with playing Daf in Sulaymaniyah, Iraqi Kurdistan. Musical instruments (except the Daf) have traditionally been considered as prohibited by the four orthodox Sunni schools,[137][141][142][143][144] and the more orthodox Sufi tariqas also continued to prohibit their use. Throughout history most Sufi saints have stressed that musical instruments are forbidden.[137][145][146] However some Sufi Saints permitted and encouraged it, whilst maintaining that musical instruments and female voices should not be introduced, although these are common practice today. [137][145]

For example Qawwali was originally a form of Sufi devotional singing popular in the Indian subcontinent, and is now usually performed at dargahs. Sufi saint Amir Khusrau is said to have infused Persian, Arabic Turkish and Indian classical melodic styles to create the genre in the 13th century. The songs are classified into hamd, na'at, manqabat, marsiya or ghazal, among others.

Nowadays, the songs last for about 15 to 30 minutes, are performed by a group of singers, and instruments including the harmonium, tabla and dholak are used. Pakistani singing maestro Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is credited with popularizing qawwali all over the world.[147]

Saints

Main article: Wali

A Persian miniature depicting the medieval saint and mystic Ahmad Ghazali (d. 1123), brother of the famous Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (d. 1111), talking to a disciple, from the Meetings of the Lovers (1552)

Walī (Arabic: ولي, plural 'awliyā' أولياء) is an Arabic word whose literal meanings include "custodian", "protector", "helper", and "friend".[148] In the vernacular, it is most commonly used by Muslims to indicate an Islamic saint, otherwise referred to by the more literal "friend of God".[149][150][151] In the traditional Islamic understanding of saints, the saint is portrayed as someone "marked by [special] divine favor ... [and]

holiness", and who is specifically "chosen by God and endowed with exceptional gifts, such as the ability to work miracles." [152] The doctrine of saints was articulated by Islamic scholars very early on in Muslim history, [153] [154] [2] [155] and particular verses of the Quran and certain hadith were interpreted by early Muslim thinkers as "documentary evidence" [2] of the existence of saints.

Since the first Muslim hagiographies were written during the period when Sufism began its rapid expansion, many of the figures who later came to be regarded as the major saints in Sunni Islam were the early Sufi mystics, like Hasan of Basra (d. 728), Farqad Sabakhi (d. 729), Dawud Tai (d. 777-81), Rabi'a al-'Adawiyya (d. 801), Ma'ruf al-Karkhi (d. 815), and Junayd of Baghdad (d. 910). From the twelfth to the fourteenth century, "the general veneration of saints, among both people and sovereigns, reached its definitive form with the organization of Sufism ... into orders or brotherhoods." [156] In the common expressions of Islamic piety of this period, the saint was understood to be "a contemplative whose state of spiritual perfection ... [found] permanent expression in the teaching bequeathed to his disciples." [156]

Visitation

Main article: Ziyara

Sufi mosque in Esfahan, Iran

In popular Sufism (i.e. devotional practices that have achieved currency in world cultures through Sufi influence), one common practice is to visit or make pilgrimages to the tombs of saints, renowned scholars, and righteous people. This is a particularly common practice in South Asia, where famous tombs include such saints as Sayyid Ali Hamadani in Kulob, Tajikistan; Afāq Khoja, near Kashgar, China; Lal Shahbaz Qalandar in Sindh; Ali Hujwari in Lahore, Pakistan; Bahauddin Zakariya in Multan Pakistan; Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer, India; Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi, India; and Shah Jalal in Sylhet, Bangladesh.

Likewise, in Fes, Morocco, a popular destination for such pious visitation is the Zaouia Moulay Idriss II and the yearly visitation to see the current sheikh of the Qadiri Boutchichi Tariqah, Sheikh Sidi Hamza al Qadiri al Boutchichi to celebrate the Mawlid (which is usually televised on Moroccan National television). [157] [158] This action has voiced particular condemnation by the Salafis.

Miracles

Main article: Karamat

In Islamic mysticism, karamat (Arabic: كرامات karāmāt, pl. of كرامة karāmah, lit. generosity, high-mindedness [159]) refers to supernatural wonders performed by Muslim saints. In the technical vocabulary of Islamic religious sciences, the singular form karama has a sense similar to charisma, a favor or spiritual gift freely bestowed by God. [160] The marvels ascribed to Islamic saints have included supernatural physical actions, predictions of the future, and "interpretation of the secrets of hearts". [160]

Historically, a "belief in the miracles of saints (karāmāt al-awliyā', literally 'marvels of the friends [of God]')" has been "a requirement in Sunni Islam".[161]

Shrines

A dargah (Persian: درگاه dargâh or درگه dargah, also in Punjabi and Urdu) is a shrine built over the grave of a revered religious figure, often a Sufi saint or dervish. Sufis often visit the shrine for ziyarat, a term associated with religious visits and pilgrimages. Dargahs are often associated with Sufi eating and meeting rooms and hostels, called khanqah or hospices. They usually include a mosque, meeting rooms, Islamic religious schools (madrassas), residences for a teacher or caretaker, hospitals, and other buildings for community purposes.

Theoretical perspectives

The works of Al-Ghazali firmly defended the concepts of Sufism within the Islamic faith. Traditional Islamic scholars have recognized two major branches within the practice of Sufism and use this as one key to differentiating among the approaches of different masters and devotional lineages.[162]

On the one hand there is the order from the signs to the Signifier (or from the arts to the Artisan). In this branch, the seeker begins by purifying the lower self of every corrupting influence that stands in the way of recognizing all of creation as the work of God, as God's active self-disclosure or theophany.[163] This is the way of Imam Al-Ghazali and of the majority of the Sufi orders.

On the other hand, there is the order from the Signifier to his signs, from the Artisan to his works. In this branch the seeker experiences divine attraction (jadhba), and is able to enter the order with a glimpse of its endpoint, of direct apprehension of the Divine Presence towards which all spiritual striving is directed. This does not replace the striving to purify the heart, as in the other branch; it simply stems from a different point of entry into the path. This is the way primarily of the masters of the Naqshbandi and Shadhili orders.[164]

Contemporary scholars may also recognize a third branch, attributed to the late Ottoman scholar Said Nursi and explicated in his vast Qur'an commentary called the Risale-i Nur. This approach entails strict adherence to the way of Muhammad, in the understanding that this wont, or sunnah, proposes a complete devotional spirituality adequate to those without access to a master of the Sufi way.[165]

Contributions to other domains of scholarship

Sufism has contributed significantly to the elaboration of theoretical perspectives in many domains of intellectual endeavor. For instance, the doctrine of "subtle centers" or centers of subtle cognition (known as Lataif-e-sitta) addresses the matter of the awakening of spiritual intuition.[166] In general, these subtle centers or latâ'if are

thought of as faculties that are to be purified sequentially in order to bring the seeker's wayfaring to completion. A concise and useful summary of this system from a living exponent of this tradition has been published by Muhammad Emin Er.[162]

Sufi psychology has influenced many areas of thinking both within and outside of Islam, drawing primarily upon three concepts. Ja'far al-Sadiq (both an imam in the Shia tradition and a respected scholar and link in chains of Sufi transmission in all Islamic sects) held that human beings are dominated by a lower self called the nafs (self, ego, person), a faculty of spiritual intuition called the qalb (heart), and ruh (soul). These interact in various ways, producing the spiritual types of the tyrant (dominated by nafs), the person of faith and moderation (dominated by the spiritual heart), and the person lost in love for God (dominated by the ruh).[167]

Of note with regard to the spread of Sufi psychology in the West is Robert Frager, a Sufi teacher authorized in the Jerrahi order. Frager was a trained psychologist, born in the United States, who converted to Islam in the course of his practice of Sufism and wrote extensively on Sufism and psychology.[168][non-primary source needed]

Sufi cosmology and Sufi metaphysics are also noteworthy areas of intellectual accomplishment.[169]

Prominent Sufis

See also: List of Sufi saints and List of Sufis

Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya

Depiction of Rabi'a grinding grain from a Persian dictionary

Rābi'a al-'Adawiyya or Rabia Basri was a Sufi saint, one of the earliest Sufi mystics and an influential religious figure from Iraq.[170] Rabi'a was born of very poor origin, but was captured by bandits at a later age and sold into slavery. She was, however, released by her master when he awoke one night to see the light of sanctity shining above her head. [171] Prominent Sufi leader Hasan of Basra is said "I passed one whole night and day with Rabi'a ... it never passed through my mind that I was a man nor did it occur to her that she was a woman... when I saw her I saw myself as bankrupt and Rabi'a as truly sincere." [172] Rabi'a al-Adawiyya is known for her teachings and emphasis on the centrality of the love of God to a holy life.[173] She is said to have proclaimed, running down the streets of Basra, Iraq:

O God! If I worship You for fear of Hell, burn me in Hell, and if I worship You in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise. But if I worship You for Your Own sake, grudge me not Your everlasting Beauty.

—Rabi'a al-Adawiyya

There are different opinions about the death and resting place of Rabia Basri. Some believe her resting place to be Jerusalem whereas others believe it to be Basra.[174] [175]

Junayd of Baghdad

Junayd al-Baghdadi (830–910) was one of the earlier Sufis. He was a Persian Sufi and one of the most famous of the early Islamic saints and is a central figure in the spiritual lineages of many Sufi orders.[176][177] Junayd al-Baghdadi taught in Baghdad throughout his lifetime and was an important figure in the development of Sufi beliefs. Like Hasan of Basra before him, was widely revered by his students and disciples as well as quoted by other mystics. Because of his importance among Sufis, Junayd was often referred to as the "Sultan".[178]

Bayazid Bastami

Bayazid Bastami was a recognized and influential Sufi personality from the Tayfuriyya order.[179] Bastami was born in 804 in Bastam.[180] Bayazid is regarded for his devout commitment to the Sunnah and his dedication to fundamental Islamic principles and practices.

Shaykh Abdul Qadir Gilani

Geometric tiling on the underside of the dome of Hafiz Shirazi's tomb in Shiraz
Shaykh Abdul Qadir Gilani (1077–1166) was a Mesopotamian-born Hanbali jurist and prominent Sufi scholar based in Baghdad, with Persian roots. Gilani spent his early life in Na'if, a town just East of Baghdad, also the town of his birth. There, he pursued the study of Hanbali law. Abu Saeed Mubarak Makhzoomi gave Gilani lessons in fiqh. He was given lessons about hadith by Abu Bakr ibn Muzaffar. He was given lessons about Tafsir by Abu Muhammad Ja'far, a commentator. His Sufi spiritual instructor was Abu'l-Khair Hammad ibn Muslim al-Dabbas. After completing his education, Gilani left Baghdad. He spent twenty-five years as a reclusive wanderer in the desert regions of Iraq. In 1127, Gilani returned to Baghdad and began to preach to the public. He joined the teaching staff of the school belonging to his own teacher, Abu Saeed Mubarak Makhzoomi, and was popular with students. In the morning he taught hadith and tafsir, and in the afternoon held discourse on the science of the heart and the virtues of the Quran. He is the founder of the Qadiriyya order, of which its eponym is his patronym. [181]

Abul Hasan ash-Shadhili

Abul Hasan ash-Shadhili (died 1258) was the founder of the Shadhiliyya order, and introduced dhikr jahri (the remembrance of God out loud, as opposed to the silent dhikr). He taught that his followers need not abstain from what Islam has not forbidden, but to be grateful for what God has bestowed upon them,[182] in contrast to the majority of Sufis, who preach to deny oneself and to destroy the ego-self (nafs). The "Order of Patience" (Tariqus-Sabr), Shadhiliyya is formulated to be "Order of Gratitude" (Tariqush-Shukr). Imam Shadhili also gave eighteen valuable hizbs (litanies) to his followers, out of which the notable Hizb al-Bahr[183] is recited worldwide even today.

Moinuddin Chishti

A Mughal-era Sufi prayer book from the Chishti order

Moinuddin Chishti (1141–1236), known as Gharīb Nawāz ("Benefactor of the Poor"), was the most famous Sufi saint of the Chishti Order. Moinuddin Chishti introduced and established the order in the Indian subcontinent. The initial spiritual chain or silsila of the Chishti order in India, comprising Moinuddin Chishti, Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid, Nizamuddin Auliya (each successive person being the disciple of the previous one), constitutes the great Sufi saints of Indian history. Moinuddin Chishtī turned towards India, reputedly after a dream in which Muhammad blessed him to do so. After a brief stay at Lahore, he reached Ajmer along with Sultan Shahāb-ud-Din Muhammad Ghori, and settled down there. In Ajmer, he attracted a substantial following, acquiring a great deal of respect amongst the residents of the city. Moinuddin Chishtī practiced the Sufi Sulh-e-Kul (peace to all) concept to promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims.[184]

Bahauddin Naqshband

Bahauddin Naqshband (1318–1389) was a prominent Sufi master of the 14th century who founded the Naqshbandi Sufi order. Born in the village of Qasr-i Hinduvar near Bukhara, Uzbekistan, he was a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. His early life was marked by a deep spiritual inclination. He sought out the guidance of renowned Sufi teachers and quickly demonstrated exceptional talent and understanding. His primary teacher was Mohammad Baba As-Samasi, who initiated him into the spiritual path. His approach to Sufism emphasized inner contemplation, discipline, and a focus on the unseen. He advocated for a balanced lifestyle, combining spiritual practices with worldly responsibilities. His teachings were rooted in the Quran and the Sunnah, and he emphasized the importance of following the example of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Naqshbandi order became one of the most influential Sufi orders in Islamic history. It spread throughout Central Asia, the Middle East, and eventually to South Asia and the West. The order's emphasis on spiritual discipline, inner work, and social engagement resonated with many seekers.

Ahmad Al-Tijani

A manuscript of Sufi Islamic theology, Shams al-Ma'arif (The Book of the Sun of Gnosis) was written by the Algerian Sufi master Ahmad al-Buni during the 12th century.

Ahmed Tijani (1737–1815), in Arabic سيدي أحمد التجاني (Sidi Ahmed Tijani), was the founder of the Tijaniyya Sufi order. He was born in a Berber family,[185][186][187] in Aïn Madhi, present-day Algeria, and died at the age of 78 in Fez.[188][189]

Al-Ghazālī

al-Ghazali (c. 1058 – 1111) was a Sunni Muslim polymath.[190] He was a prominent Sufi, jurisconsult, legal theoretician, mufti, philosopher, theologian, logician and mystic. [191] He is considered to be the 11th century's mujaddid, a renewer of the faith, who

appears once every 100 years.[192] Al-Ghazali's works were so highly acclaimed by his contemporaries that he was awarded the honorific title "Proof of Islam".[193] He was a prominent mujtahid in the Shafi'i school of law.[194] His magnum opus was *Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn* ("The Revival of the Religious Sciences").[195] His works include *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* ("Incoherence of the Philosophers"), a landmark in the history of philosophy.[196]

Sayyed Badiuddin

Sayyid Badiuddin[197] was a Sufi saint who founded the Madariyya Silsila and order.[198] He was also known by the title Qutb-ul-Madar.[199]

He hailed originally from Syria, and was born in Aleppo[197] to a Syed Hussaini family.[200] His teacher was Bayazid Tayfur al-Bistami.[201] After making a pilgrimage to Medina, he journeyed to India to spread the Islamic faith, where he founded the Madariyya order.[199] His tomb is at Makanpur.[202]

Ibn Arabi

Ibn 'Arabi (or Ibn al-'Arabi) (AH 561 – AH 638; 1165–1240) was one of the most influential Sufis, revered for his profound spiritual insight, refined taste, and deep knowledge of God. Over the centuries, he has been honored with the title "The Grand Master" (Arabic: الشيخ الأكبر). Ibn Arabi founded the Sufi order known as "Al Akbariyya" (Arabic: الأكبرية), which remains active to this day. The order, based in Cairo, continues to spread his teachings and principles through its own sheikh. Ibn Arabi's writings, especially *al-Futuhat al-Makkiyya* and *Fusus al-Hikam*, have been studied within all Sufi orders as the clearest expression of tawhid (Divine Unity), though because of their recondite nature they were often only given to initiates. His teachings later became known as the school of *wahdat al-wujud* (the Oneness of Being). He himself considered his writings to have been divinely inspired. As he expressed the way to one of his close disciples, his legacy is that "you should never ever abandon your servant-hood (*ubudiyya*), and that there may never be in your soul a longing for any existing thing".[203]

Mansur Al-Hallaj

Mansur Al-Hallaj (died 922) is renowned for his claim, *Ana-l-Haqq* ("I am the Truth"), his ecstatic Sufism and state-trial. His refusal to recant this utterance, which was regarded as apostasy, led to a long trial. He was imprisoned for 11 years in a Baghdad prison, before being tortured and publicly beheaded on 26 March 922. He is still revered by Sufis for his willingness to embrace torture and death rather than recant. It is said that during his prayers, he would say "O Lord! You are the guide of those who are passing through the Valley of Bewilderment. If I am a heretic, enlarge my heresy".[204]

Yusuf Abu al-Haggag

Yusuf Abu al-Haggag (c. 1150 – c. 1245) was a Sufi scholar and sheikh preaching principally in Luxor, Egypt.[205] He devoted himself to knowledge, asceticism and

worship.[206] In his pursuits, he earned the nickname "Father of the Pilgrim". His birthday is celebrated today annually in Luxor, with people convening at the Abu Haggag Mosque.

Notable Sufi works

Main article: Sufi literature

Among the most popular Sufi works are:[207][208][209]

Al-Ta'arruf li-Madhhab Ahl al-Tasawwuf (ar) (The Exploration of the Path of Sufis) by Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi (d. ca. 380/990), a popular text about which 'Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 632/1234) is reported to have said: "if it were not for the Ta'arruf, we would know nothing about Sufism".[210]

Qūt al-Qulūb (ar) (Nourishment of the Hearts) by Abu Talib al-Makki (d. 386/996), an encyclopedic manual of Sufism (Islamic mystical teachings), which would have a significant influence on al-Ghazali's Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Religious Sciences).[211][212]

Hilyat al-Awliya wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya (The Ornament of God's Friends and Generations of Pure Ones) by Abu Na'im al-Isfahani (d. 430/1038), which is a voluminous collection of biographies of Sufis and other early Muslim religious leaders.[213]

Al-Risala al-Qushayriyya (The Qushayrian Treatise) by al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072), an indispensable reference book for those who study and specialize in Islamic mysticism. It is considered as one of the most popular Sufi manuals and has served as a primary textbook for many generations of Sufi novices to the present.[214]

Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din (The Revival of the Sciences of Religion) by al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111). It is widely regarded as one of the most complete compendiums of Muslim thought and practice ever written, and is among the most influential books in the history of Islam. As its title indicates, it is a sustained attempt to put vigour and liveliness back into Muslim religious discourse.[215]

Al-Ghunya li-Talibi Tariq al-Haqq (ar) (Sufficient Provision for Seekers of the Path of the Truth) by 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani (d. 561/1166).[216][217] Translated from Arabic into English for the first time by Muhtar Holland.

'Awarif al-Ma'arif (de) (The Gifts of Spiritual Perceptions) by Shihab al-Din 'Umar al-Suhrawardi (d. 632/1234), was one of the more popular Sufi books of his time, and posthumously it became the standard preparatory text book for Sufi novices around the Islamic world.[218][219]

Al-Hikam al-'Ata'iyya (ar) (The Aphorisms of Ibn 'Ata' Allah) by Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Sakandari (d. 709/1309), a collection of 261 Sufi aphorisms and proverbs (some counted it 264) containing precise contemplative reflections on man's relations with Allah (God), based on the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and deals with issues related to tawhid (Islamic monotheism), ethics, morality and day-to-day conduct. [220]

Sufi commentaries on the Qur'an

Sufis have also made contributions to the Qur'anic exegetical literature, expounding the inner esoteric meanings of the Qur'an.[221][222] Among such works are the following: [223]

Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim (ar) (Interpretation of the Great Qur'an) by Sahl al-Tustari (d. 283/896),[224] the oldest Sufi commentary on the Qur'an.[225]

Lata'if al-Isharat (ar) (Subtleties of the Allusions) by al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072).[226]

'Ara'is al-Bayan fi Haqa'iq al-Qur'an (ar) (The Brides of Explication Concerning the Hidden Realities of the Qur'an) by Ruzbihan al-Baqli (d. 606/1209).

Al-Ta'wilat al-Najmiyya (ar) (Starry Interpretations) by Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 618/1221).

This is a jointly-authored work, started by Najm al-Din Kubra, followed by his student Najm al-Din Razi (d. 654/1256) and finished by 'Alā' al-Dawla al-Simnani (d. 736/1336). [227]

Ghara'ib al-Qur'an wa Ragha'ib al-Furqan (Wonders of the Qur'an and Desiderata of the Criterion) by Nizam al-Din al-Nisaburi (d. ca. 728/1328).

Anwar al-Qur'an wa Asrar al-Furqan (Lights of the Qur'an and Secrets of the Criterion) by Mulla 'Ali al-Qari (d. 1014/1606).

Ruh al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an (ar) (The Spirit of Explanation in the Commentary on the Qur'an) by Isma'il Haqqi al-Brusawi/Bursevi (d. 1137/1725).[228] He started this voluminous Qur'anic commentary and completed it in twenty-three years.[229]

Al-Bahr al-Madeed fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Majeed (The Vast Sea in the Interpretation of the Glorious Qur'an) by Ahmad ibn 'Ajiba (d. 1224/1809).

Reception

Persecution of Sufi Muslims

Main article: Persecution of Sufis

See also: Sectarian violence among Muslims and Sufi–Salafi relations

Muslim pilgrims gathered around the *Ḍarīḥ* covering the grave (qabr) of the 13th-century Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (shrine located in Sehwan Sharif, Pakistan); on 16 February 2017, ISIS claimed responsibility for a suicide attack on the shrine, which resulted in the deaths of 90 people.[230][231][232]

The persecution of Sufism and Sufi Muslims over the course of centuries has included acts of religious discrimination, persecution and violence, such as the destruction of Sufi shrines, tombs, and mosques, suppression of Sufi orders, and discrimination against adherents of Sufism in a number of Muslim-majority countries.[233] The Republic of Turkey banned all Sufi orders and abolished their institutions in 1925, after Sufis opposed the new secular order. The Islamic Republic of Iran has harassed Shia Sufis, reportedly for their lack of support for the government doctrine of "governance of the jurist" (i.e., that the supreme Shiite jurist should be the nation's political leader).

In most other Muslim-majority countries, attacks on Sufis and especially their shrines have come from adherents of puritanical fundamentalist Islamic movements (Salafism and Wahhabism), who believe that practices such as visitation to and veneration of the tombs of Sufi saints, celebration of the birthdays of Sufi saints, and dhikr ("remembrance" of God) ceremonies are *bid'ah* (impure "innovation") and *shirk* ("polytheistic").[233][234][235][236][237]

In Egypt, at least 305 people were killed and more than 100 wounded during the

November 2017 Islamic terrorist attack on a Sufi mosque located in Sinai; it is considered one of the worst terrorist attacks in the history of modern Egypt.[234][238] Most of the victims were Sufis.[234][238]

Perception outside Islam

A choreographed Sufi performance on a Friday in Sudan

Sufi mysticism has long exercised a fascination upon the Western world, and especially its Orientalist scholars.[239] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, European orientalists treated Sufism and Islam as distinct subjects, leading to "an over-emphasis on the translation of classical Sufi mystical literature" in the academic study of Sufism at the expense of the lived practices in Islam, as well as a separation of Sufism from its Islamic roots in the development of Sufism as a religious form in the West.[240][241] Figures like Rumi have become well known in the United States, where Sufism is perceived as a peaceful and apolitical form of Islam.[239][242] Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that the preceding theories are false according to the point of view of Sufism.[243]

A 17th-century miniature of Nasreddin, a Seljuk satirical figure, currently in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library

The Islamic Institute in Mannheim, Germany, which works towards the integration of Europe and Muslims, sees Sufism as particularly suited for interreligious dialogue and intercultural harmonisation in democratic and pluralist societies; it has described Sufism as a symbol of tolerance and humanism—nondogmatic, flexible and non-violent.[244] According to Philip Jenkins, a professor at Baylor University, "the Sufis are much more than tactical allies for the West: they are, potentially, the greatest hope for pluralism and democracy within Muslim nations." Likewise, several governments and organisations have advocated the promotion of Sufism as a means of combating intolerant and violent strains of Islam.[245] For example, the Chinese and Russian[246] governments openly favor Sufism as the best means of protecting against Islamist subversion. The British government, especially following the 7 July 2005 London bombings, has favoured Sufi groups in its battle against Muslim extremist currents. The influential RAND Corporation, an American think-tank, issued a major report titled "Building Moderate Muslim Networks", which urged the US government to form links with and bolster[247] Muslim groups that opposed Islamist extremism. The report stressed the Sufi role as moderate traditionalists open to change, and thus as allies against violence.[248][249] News organisations such as the BBC, Economist and Boston Globe have also seen Sufism as a means to deal with violent Muslim extremists.[250]

Idries Shah states that Sufism is universal in nature, its roots predating the rise of Islam and Christianity.[251] He quotes Suhrawardi as saying that "this (Sufism) was a form of wisdom known to and practiced by a succession of sages including the mysterious ancient Hermes of Egypt.", and that Ibn al-Farid "stresses that Sufism lies behind and before systematization; that 'our wine existed before what you call the grape and the vine' (the school and the system)..."[252] Shah's views have however been rejected by

modern scholars.[7] Such modern trends of neo-Sufis in Western countries allow non-Muslims to receive "instructions on following the Sufi path", not without opposition by Muslims who consider such instruction outside the sphere of Islam.[253]

Similarities with Eastern religions

See also: Hindu-Islamic relations § Sufism

Numerous comparisons have been made between Sufism and the mystic components of some Eastern religions.

The tenth-century Persian polymath Al-Biruni in his book *Tahaqeeq Ma Lilhind Min Makulat Makulat Fi Aliaqbal Am Marzula* (Critical Study of Indian Speech: Rationally Acceptable or Rejected) discusses the similarity of some Sufism concepts with aspects of Hinduism, such as: Atma with ruh, tanasukh with reincarnation, Moksha with Fanafillah, Ittihad with Nirvana: union between Paramatma in Jivatma, Avatar or Incarnation with Hulul, Vedanta with Wahdatul Ujud, Mujadah with Sadhana.[citation needed]

Other scholars have likewise compared the Sufi concept of *Waḥdat al-Wujūd* to Advaita Vedanta,[254] Fanaa to Samadhi,[255] Muraqaba to Dhyana, and *tariqa* to the Noble Eightfold Path.[256]

The ninth-century Iranian mystic Bayazid Bostami is alleged to have imported certain concepts from Hindusim into his version of Sufism under the conceptual umbrella of *baqaa*, meaning perfection.[257] Ibn al-Arabi and Mansur al-Hallaj both referred to Muhammad as having attained perfection and titled him as *Al-Insān al-Kāmil*. [258][259][260][261][262][263] Inayat Khan believed that the God worshipped by Sufis is not specific to any particular religion or creed, but is the same God worshipped by people of all beliefs. This God is not limited by any name, whether it be Allah, God, Gott, Dieu, Khuda, Brahma, or Bhagwan.[264]

Buddhist stories also circulated in Sufi circles. One of them being a story about blind men trying to describe an elephant.[265]

Influence on Judaism

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See also: Jewish philosophy

There is evidence that Sufism influenced the development of some schools of Jewish philosophy and ethics. In the first writing of this kind, we see *Kitab al-Hidayah ila Fara'id al-Ḳulub*, *Duties of the Heart*, of Bahya ibn Paquda. This book was translated by Judah ibn Tibbon into Hebrew under the title *Chovot HaLevavot*. [266]

The precepts prescribed by the Torah number 613 only; those dictated by the intellect

are innumerable.

—Kremer, Alfred Von. 1868. "Notice sur Sha'rani". *Journal Asiatique* 11 (6): 258.

In the ethical writings of the Sufis Al-Kusajri and Al-Harawi there are sections which treat of the same subjects as those treated in the Chovot ha-Lebabot and which bear the same titles: e.g., "Bab al-Tawakkul"; "Bab al-Taubah"; "Bab al-Muḥasabah"; "Bab al-Tawaḍu"; "Bab al-Zuhd". In the ninth gate, Baḥya directly quotes sayings of the Sufis, whom he calls Perushim. However, the author of the Chovot HaLevavot did not go so far as to approve of the asceticism of the Sufis, although he showed a marked predilection for their ethical principles.

Abraham Maimonides, the son of the Jewish philosopher Maimonides, believed that Sufi practices and doctrines continue the tradition of the biblical prophets.[267]

Abraham Maimonides' principal work was originally composed in Judeo-Arabic and entitled "כתאב כפאיה אלעאבדין" Kitāb Kifāyah al-'Ābidīn (A Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God). From the extant surviving portion it is conjectured that the treatise was three times as long as his father's Guide for the Perplexed. In the book, he evidences a great appreciation for, and affinity to, Sufism. Followers of his path continued to foster a Jewish-Sufi form of pietism for at least a century, and he is rightly considered the founder of this pietistic school, which was centered in Egypt.[268]

The followers of this path, which they called Hasidism (not to be confused with the [later] Jewish Hasidic movement) or Sufism (Tasawwuf), practiced spiritual retreats, solitude, fasting and sleep deprivation. The Jewish Sufis maintained their own brotherhood, guided by a religious leader like a Sufi sheikh.[269]

The Jewish Encyclopedia, in its entry on Sufism, states that the revival of Jewish mysticism in Muslim countries is probably due to the spread of Sufism in the same geographical areas. The entry details many parallels to Sufic concepts found in the writings of prominent Kabbalists during the Golden age of Jewish culture in Spain.[270] [271]

Culture

Literature

Tomb shrine of Rumi, Konya, Turkey

The 13th century Persian poet Rumi is considered one of the most influential figures of Sufism, as well as one of the greatest poets of all time. He has become one of the most widely read poets in the United States, thanks largely to the interpretative translations published by Coleman Barks.[272] Elif Şafak's novel *The Forty Rules of Love* is a fictionalized account of Rumi's encounter with the Persian dervish Shams Tabrizi.[273]

Muhammad Iqbal, one of the greatest Urdu poets, has discussed Sufism, philosophy

and Islam in his English work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. [274]
[non-primary source needed]

Sama

Sama is regarded as an important element in different Sufi orders. In South Asia, it is affiliated mostly with Chishti Order. It develops into a distinct art form, especially during the reign of Khwaja Amir Khusrau and his contemporary Sufi masters, such as Khwaja Nizamuddin Auliya and others. [275] Spiritual experiences were desired by Sufis through Sama, listening to poetry or Islamic mystical verses with the use of different musical instruments, aiming to attain ecstasy in divine love of Allah and his Prophet. [276]

Visual art

Main article: Islamic art

Many painters and visual artists have explored the Sufi motif through various disciplines. One of the outstanding pieces in the Brooklyn Museum's Islamic gallery has been the museum's associate curator of Islamic art, is a large 19th- or early-20th-century portrayal of the Battle of Karbala painted by Abbas Al-Musavi, [277] which was a violent episode in the disagreement between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam; during this battle, Husayn ibn Ali, a pious grandson of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, died and is considered a martyr in Islam. [278]

In July 2016, at International Sufi Festival held in Noida Film City, UP, India, H.E. Abdul Basit who was the High Commissioner of Pakistan to India at that time, while inaugurating the exhibition of Farkhananda Khan 'Fida' said, "There is no barrier of words or explanation about the paintings or rather there is a soothing message of brotherhood, peace in Sufism". [279]

Scientific research

A systematic review published in 2023 examined the relationship between Islamic-Sufi spirituality and mental health outcomes, revealing a positive connection between Sufi spirituality and reductions in anxiety and depression among patients. [280]

A study on political Sufism in contemporary Kazakhstan examined patterns of religious continuity and the role of Sufi networks in political mobilization. [281]

An overview of Sufi studies at American universities indicated that Sufism has become a significant area of scholarly inquiry, with dedicated programs and research centers focusing on its various aspects. [282]

Recent bibliometric analyses have also mapped the intellectual structure and global trends in Sufi studies. [283]

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Notes

The following are among definitions of Sufism quoted in an early Sufi treatise by Abu

Nasr as-Sarraj:

- "Sufism is that you should be with God—without any attachment." (Junayd of Baghdad)
- "Sufism consists of abandoning oneself to God in accordance with what God wills." (Ruwaym ibn Ahmad)
- "Sufism is that you should not possess anything nor should anything possess you." (Samnun)
- "Sufism consists of entering every exalted quality (khulq) and leaving behind every despicable quality." (Abu Muhammad al-Jariri)
- "Sufism is that at each moment the servant should be in accord with what is most appropriate (awla) at that moment." ('Amr ibn 'Uthman al-Makki)

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Sufism

CosmologyMetaphysicsPhilosophy

Theologians

Ash'arism

(al-Ash'ari)

Al-BayhaqiAl-BaqillaniAl-JuwayniAl-QushayriAl-ShahrastaniAl-GhazaliAl-TaftazaniAl-Maziribn FurakIbn Abi Zayd al-QayrawaniZakariyya al-AnsariAbu Mansur al-BaghdadiAbu Ishaq al-Isfara'inIbn Aqillbn TumartAbdul Qadir GilaniAbu al-Walid al-BajiAbu Bakr ibn al-ArabIbn al-JawziQadi AyyadAhmad al-Rifa'iFakhr al-Din al-RaziSayf al-Din al-Amidilzz al-Din ibn 'Abd al-SalamTaqi al-Din al-SubkiShihab al-Din al-QarafiAbu Hayyan al-GharnatiAl-Baydawilbn KhaldunIbn ArafaAbd al-Rahman al-Tha'alibilbn Hajar al-HaytamiAl-Sha'raniJalal al-Din al-DawaniAl-Maqqari al-TilmisaniAbd al-Rahman al-Fasilbn AshirAl-BahūtīMuhammad MayyaraAbu Ali al-Hassan al-Yusi'IllishIbrahim al-BajuriAbdullah ibn Alawi al-HaddadAhmad al-DardirMuhammad Arafa al-DesoukiAhmad Zayni DahlanSaid Nursī

Early Sunni

Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu'mān ibn Thābit (Hanafiyah)Malik ibn Anas (Maliki)Al-Shafi'i (Shafi'i)

Maturidism

(Al-Maturidi)

Al-Hakim al-SamarqandiAl-SarakhsiAl-BazdawiAbu al-Yusr al-BazdawiAbu al-Mu'in al-NasafiAbu Ishaq al-Saffar al-BukhariAbu al-Layth al-Samarqandi'Ala' al-Din al-BukhariAl-Sharif al-JurjaniAkmal al-Din al-BabartiJamal al-Din al-GhaznawiNur al-Din al-SabuniNajm al-Din 'Umar al-NasafiSiraj al-Din al-UshiShams al-Din al-SamarqandiKhidr Beylbn KemalAli QushjiAli al-QariAl-MaydaniAhmad SirhindiAnwar Shah KashmiriShah Waliullah DehlawiShah Abdul AzizKhalil Ahmad SaharanpuriZakariyya KandhlawiRahmatullah KairanawiMurtada al-ZabidiAbd al-Ghani al-NabulsiMuhammad Abu ZahraKanthapuram A. P. Aboobacker MusliyarRumi

Mu'attila

Al-Ja'd ibn Dirham Mu'jbiraAbū Muḥrīz Jahm ibn Ṣafwān ar-Rāsibī as-Samarqāndī at-Tirmidhī Jahmiyya Abū Abdīrrahmān Bishr ibn Ghiyāth ibn Abī Karīma al-Marīsī al-Baghdādī

Mu'jassimā

Abū'l-Hassan Muqātil ibn Sulaymān ibn Bashīr al-Azdī al-Balkhī (Muqātilīyya)Abū Muḥāmmad (Abū'l-Hākem) Heshām ibn Sālem al-Jawālikī al-Juzjanī al-Kūfī JawālikīyyaRum AbdalsIbn Karram (Karramiyya)

Murji'ah

Abū Marwān Gaylān ibn Mūsīm ad-Dimashqī an-Nabati al-Qībtī (Murjī-Qadariyah)

Mu'tazila

(Wasil ibn 'Ata')

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm ibn Sayyār ibn Hānī' an-Nazzām (Nazzāmīyya)Abū Bakr Abdurrahmān ibn Kaysān al-AsāmmAbū Mūsā Isā ibn Subeyh (Sabīh) al-Murdār al-Bāsri (Murdārīyya)Hīshām ibn Amr al-Fuwātī ash-Shaybānī (Hīshāmīyya)Abū Sahl Abbād ibn Sulaimān (Salmān) as-SāymarīAbū Alī Muḥāmmad ibn Abdī'l-Wahhāb ibn Sallām al-Jubbā'ī (Jubbāīyya)Abū'l-Hūsayn Abdūrrāhīm ibn Muḥāmmad ibn Uthmān al-Hayyāt (Hayyātīyya)Ja'far ibn HarbJa'far ibn MūbassīrAbū Uthmān Amr ibn Bhār ibn

Māhbūb al-Jāhiz al-Kinānī (Jāhizīyya)Al-Qadi 'Abd al-Jabbar Abu al-Husayn al-BasriAl-ZamakhshariAmr ibn Ubaydlbn Abi'l-HadidSahib ibn AbbadAbū Amr Ẹirār ibn Amr al-Gatafānī al-Kūfī (Ẹirārīyya)

Najjārīyya

Abū 'Abdillāh al-Husayn ibn Muḥāmmad ibn 'Abdillāh an-Najjār ar-Rāzī Abū Amr (Abū Yahyā) Hāfs al-FardMuḥāmmad ibn 'Īsā (Burgūsīyya)Abū 'Abdallāh Ibnū'z-Zā'farānī (Zā'farānīyya)Mustadrakīyya

Salafi Theologians

Ibn TaymiyyahIbnul QayyimMuhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab WahhabismAl-

ShawkaniRashid Ridalbn BazAl-UthayminMuqbil bin Hadi al-Wadī'iAl-AlbaniSaleh Al-

FawzanRabee al-Madkhali MadkhalismSyed Nazeer Husain Ahl-i HadithSiddiq Hasan

KhanZubair Ali ZaiSafar Al-Hawali Sahwa movementSalman al-OudaOsama bin Laden

Salafi JihadismAhmad ibn Umar al-Hazimi HazimismYasir Qadhi Post-Salafism

Twelver Shi'ism

Twelve Imams AliHasan ibn AliHusayn ibn AliAli al-SajjadMuhammad al-BaqirJa'far al-

SadiqMusa al-KazimAli al-RidaMuhammad al-JawadAli al-HadiHasan al-

AskariMuhammad al-MahdiZurarah ibn A'yanHisham ibn HakamMu'min al-TaqaI-Fadl

ibn Shadhanal-Shaykh al-SaduqaI-Shaykh al-MufidSharif al-MurtazaShaykh TusiNasir

al-Din al-TusiAllamah Al-HilliMir DamadBaha al-Din al-AmiliMulla SadraMohammad-

Baqer MajlesiAgha Zia ol Din AraghiJa'far SobhaniRuhollah Khomeini Wilayat al-faqih

Isma'ili Shi'ism

Al-Qadi al-Nu'manAbu Yaqub al-SijistaniHamid al-Din al-KirmaniAl-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Din al-

ShiraziAhmad ibn Ibrahim al-NaysaburiAbu'l-Fawaris Ahmad ibn Ya'qub Tayyibi Ismā'īlī

doctrineDhu'ayb ibn MusaHassan Ala Dhikrihi's SalamIldris Imad al-DinAli ibn

Muhammad ibn al-WalidNasir al-Din Nasir Hunzai

Zaydi Shi'ism

Abu'l-Jarud al-HamdaniAhmad ibn Isa ibn ZaydAl-Qasim al-RassiAl-Hadi ila'l-Haqq

YahyaAl-Mansur al-Qasim

Key books

Sunni books

Asas al-TaqqdisAl-Baz al-AshhabAl-Farq bayn al-FiraqAl-Milal wa al-NihalAl-IrshadAl-

Aqidah al-TahawīyyahAl-Sawad al-A'zamKitab al-TawhidTafsirat al-AdillaMasnaviFihi Ma

FihiDivan-i Shams-i TabriziThe Moderation in Belief

Shia books

E'teqādāt al-EmāmīyaAl-AmaliAl-KhisalAwail Al MaqalatTashih al-l'tiqadTajrid al-l'tiqad

Independent

Encyclopedia of the Brethren of PurityKitab al-Majmu of AlawisMalfūzāt of

AhmadiyyaUmm al-Kitab of Musta'li Isma'ilism

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Islamic schools and branches

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Beliefs

God in Islam AllahTawhidMuhammad In IslamProphets of

IslamAngelsRevelationQadarJudgement DayHoliest sites
Five Pillars
ShahadaSalahSawmZakatHajj
HistoryLeaders
Timeline of the history of IslamSuccession to MuhammadEarly conquestsGolden
AgeHistoriographySahabaAhl al-BaytShi'a ImamsCaliphates
RashidunUmayyadAbbasidCórdobaFatimidAlmohadSokotoOttoman
Religious texts
QuranHadithTafsirSeerahStory of Prophets
Denominations
Sunni Ash'arismAtharismMaturidismMu'taziliSalafi WahhabismSufiShia Twelver
Shi'ismIsma'ilismAlawitesAlevism Bektashi AlevismZaydismMuhakkima/Khawarij
AzariqaModerate Kharijites Ibadi AzzabasNukkariWahbiSufriNajdatNation of
IslamAhmadiyya LahoriQuranismNon-denominational
LifeCulture
AnimalsArtAssociation
footballCalendarChildrenClothingFlagsHolidaysMosquesMadrasasMoral
teachingsMusicPeace PacifismPhilosophyPolitical aspects DemocracyPetro-
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Seasonal Holidays 2025
Qur'anic Magickal Science

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AI Overview

The Qur'an and Science: Scientific Miracles in the Holy Book

"Qur'anic Magickal Science" isn't a standard term, but it points to two distinct concepts within Islamic thought: the Quran's condemnation of forbidden magic/occultism (like sorcery with devils) and a modern idea of the Quran containing scientific miracles (like embryology or cosmology) that point to divine origin, a form of "science" revealing God's creation, not human magic. So, it contrasts forbidden magic with divinely-revealed scientific truths, using "science" in different ways.

Forbidden Magic (Sihr) in the Quran

Condemned: The Quran strongly warns against magic (sihr), viewing it as deception, disbelief, and a practice associated with devils (shayatin).

Deception: Magicians, like those confronting Moses, used illusions (bay's) to trick people's eyes, not truly altering God's natural laws.

Forbidden: Engaging in it is a major sin, often linked to polytheism, and involves seeking help from jinn for harmful acts.

Qur'anic "Scientific Miracles" (Cosmology/Biology)

Modern Interpretation: Some contemporary Muslims argue the Quran contains scientifically accurate descriptions of nature (e.g., Big Bang, embryology, ocean layers) that were unknown in the 7th century.

Divine Origin: This is presented as proof of the Quran's divine authorship, a "science" revealing God's creation through natural phenomena, not human magic.

Examples: References to the heavens and earth as a "joined entity" (singularity) or the stages of human development are cited as examples.

Key Distinction

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Black Magic (Siḥr)

Religious permissibility

Divination

In Muslim society

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Belief and practice in magic in Islam is "widespread and pervasive"^[1] and a "vital element of everyday life and practice", both historically and currently in Islamic culture.

^[2] Magic range from talisman inscribed with Divine names of God, Quranic verses, and Arabic letters, and divination, to the performance of miracles and sorcery. Most Muslims also believe in a form of divine blessing called barakah. Popular forms of talisman include the construction of Magic squares and Talismanic shirts, believed to invoke

divine favor by inscribing God's names. While miracles, considered to be a gift from God, are approved, the practise of black magic (siḥr) is prohibited. Other forms of magic intersect with what might be perceived as science, such as the prediction of the course of the planets or weather.

Licit forms of magic call upon God, the angels, prophets, jinn, and saints, while illicit magic is believed to call upon evil jinn and demons. Magic, with the purpose to heal, is permissible and used by means of shielding against the evil eye, sickness, jinn, and demons. The prohibition of magic lies in its alleged effect to cause harm, such as bestowing curses, summoning evil spirits, and causing illnesses. In the past, some Muslim scholars have rejected that magic has any real impact. However, they disapproved of sorcery nonetheless, as it is a means of deceiving people. Despite the disapproval of (black) magic, there has been no notable violence against people accused of practicing magic in the pre-modern period. However, in the modern period, various Islamic movements have shown a more hostile attitude to what is perceived as practise of magic.

Quran

Sixty-six Quranic verses reportedly relate to the subject of magic.[3] Surah 2:102 and many other verses describe magic in a negative light. Its practices are secrets that the humans "ought not to have known";[3] devils/fallen angels teach it; its practitioners will end up in hell; other verses condemn it as a pagan practice. But the Quran does not forbid magic or prescribe punishment for its practice.[4]:90 In Verse Q.10:2 Muhammad is falsely accused of being a magician by his opponents ('Yet the disbelievers said, "Indeed, this 'man' is clearly a magician!").[5][6]Not all verses make negative references to supernatural powers or those that use them. Surah al-Isra suggests that the Quran itself bestows barakah (magical blessings) upon hearers and heals them.[7] In An-Naml (Surah 27), Solomon is described as having the power to speak with animals and jinn, and command birds and devils.[8][9]

Aside from what the text of the Quran says about magic, it is thought to have supernatural properties and is used as a source of supernatural protection and healing. [10]

Surah Al-Falaq (Surah 113) is used as a prayer to God to ward off black magic, and according to hadith-literature, was revealed to Muhammad to protect him against Jann, the ancestor of the jinn.[11] Surahs Al-Fatiha (Surah 1) and An-Nas (Surah 114) are also thought to have the ability to generate barakah. There are also individual verses claimed to have power (such as the healing verses 9:15, 19:57, 16:69, 26:80, 41:44).

The muṣḥaf, or actually physical reproduction of the Quran is (thought to have) supernatural properties. Miniature reproductions of the Quran with print too small to read, are used to convey good luck, sometimes dangling from rear view mirrors of motor vehicles or worn as amulets; the ink from their pages sometimes dissolved with water and drunk as a cure for illness.[10]

Talismanic Magic

Talismanic shirt inscribed with Qur'anic verses, the Asma' al-Husna, and prayers, with views of Mecca and Medina; 17th century Turkey, Khalili Collection of Hajj and the Arts of Pilgrimage

The use of symbols, letters, and numbers for magical purpose are deeply embedded in Islamic tradition.[12] They are not only used for means of protection against the evil eye, misfortune, jinn, and demons, but also to bring good fortune, increase fertility, therapeutic means, and to preserve attractiveness.[12] Talisman (or amulets), inscribed with mystical symbols, often contain one of God's 99 names, the names of angels, or prophets. While virtually all Muslim scholars permit the use of talisman evoking God or one of His intercessors (Muhammad, Ali, saints, etc.),[12] it is prohibited to address jinn or demons.[12] As such, talisman magic differs from European charms, which usually address minor deities or demons rather than God.[12] Islamic talisman usually contain Quranic verses, pious phrases, or invocations, and function, as has been described, "a supercharged prayer".[12]

Until the ninth century, talisman often reflect pre-Islamic artistry.[12] For still unknown reasons, beginning with the 12th century, pre-Islamic designs drop out in favor of other symbolic designs, such as a pentagram, the Seal of Solomon, zodiacal signs.[12] However, most prominent at that time were magical squares (wafq).[12] The earliest magical squares were 3x3 squares in which the numerals from 1 through 9 were arranged in a way that all numbers, horizontally, vertically, and diagonally, were arranged in a way that the sum equals 15.[12] This square in particular gained great popularity and was often associated with the four Islamic archangels.[12] 6x6 squares are attested as early as the late 10th century, however, they did not enter magical vocabulary until the 13th century.[12] Magical symbols are also engraved in shirts, known as talismanic shirts, painted with symbols of the Quran. The only preserved today are from the 15th century.[12][13]

Black Magic (Siḥr)

The word usually translated as "magic" in the Quran is siḥr.[Note 1] According to Adam Silverstein, the "Arabic word for 'magic' is siḥr, ... in the Qur'an Siḥr means ... 'black magic,' but in modern Arabic the same word is used for 'entertaining magic'".[15][16] The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic defines siḥr as "bewitchment, beguilement, enchantment, fascination"; and the plural form (ashar) as "sorcery, witchcraft, magic".[17] Emilie Savage-Smith gives a very broad definition including "anything wondrous, including elegant and subtle poetry, ... sleight-of-hand tricks, ... the healing properties of plants, ... invocations to God for assistance, ... invocations to jinn or demons or the spirits of the planets, and on occasion even to the divinatory art of astrology." [18]

Toufic Fahd in the Brill Encyclopedia of Islam usually uses "magic as the translation of sihr", but "occasionally uses sorcery or witchcraft".[19] Fahd himself first defines sihr as

that which leads its subject to "believe that what he sees is real when it is not", but also includes "everything that is known as 'white' or 'natural magic'".[20] According to Fahd, magic (siḥr) is part of 'Ulūm al-Ghayb, "the occult sciences"; Theurgy (ʿilm al-khawāṣṣ wa ṭ-ṭalāsim), which Radcliff Edmonds describes as the practice of rituals to invoke action or the divine presence, especially to achieve henosis (unity with the divine) and perfecting oneself);[21] White or natural magic (ʿilm al-ḥiyal wa-ash-shaʿwadhah); and Black magic or sorcery (ʿilm as-siḥr).[3]

Michael Dols note that siḥr is mostly referring to sorcery evoking demons, and thus forbidden.[12] In his examination of about sihr in contemporary Islamic society is that it refers to prohibited (haram) magic. Remke Kruk defines the practice of siḥr as magic or sorcery, and translates material objects called siḥr as "charms".[19]

Harut and Marut in Their Forever Well (1703)

The Quran provides overall the following picture: When God (Allah) creates Adam, God orders all the angels to bow down before the new creature. Those terrestrial angels, who opposed the creation of Adam, refused and whereupon became devils; tempters and testers for humanity in order to obstruct them from gaining Divine favor.[22] According to 2:112 siḥr is then taught by the fallen angels Hārūt and Mārūt:

They "instead" followed the magic promoted by the devils during the reign of Solomon. Never did Solomon disbelieve, rather the devils disbelieved. They taught magic to the people, along with what had been revealed to the two angels, Hārūt and Mārūt, in Babylon. The two angels never taught anyone without saying, "We are only a test "for you", so do not abandon "your" faith." Yet people learned "magic" that caused a rift "even" between husband and wife; although their magic could not harm anyone except by Allah's Will. They learned what harmed them and did not benefit them—although they already knew that whoever buys into magic would have no share in the Hereafter. Miserable indeed was the price for which they sold their souls, if only they knew![23]

The description of black magic (siḥr) in the Quran as revealed by the fallen angels/devils suggests it is (in the words of Toufic Fahd), a "fragment of a celestial knowledge ..." and not forming a separate party among the Jahiliyyah (pagan Arabs).[3] Based on the verse, Irmeli Perho describes magic as "part of God's creation, like good deeds and bad deeds; like belief and unbelief". Since the magicians "evil actions will only take place if God allows it", magic is accommodated in the Islamic doctrine of "an omnipotent God". [24]

In hadith, siḥr develops into a more hostile concept. In an examination of hadith on magic and witchcraft, Irmeli Perho writes that "magic is seen as a power distinct from God, whereas in the Qurʾān magic is a power that is ultimately subject to God's will".[25] In prophetic biographies and hadith, where Muhammad becomes ill because of a magical charm which is hidden "in a well";[26] the Prophet suffered from the magic but receives a dream or a visit from Gabriel to tell him how to be cured.

One scholar, Irmeli Perho, notes that all versions of the hadith (and all hadith dealing with witchcraft) signify Islamic belief in the power of magic to harm even so great a man as the Prophet of Islam, but the many different variants of the hadith include different solutions to the curse of the charm—in some God's power against the charm is so great Muhammad does not bother to take the magic object(s) out of the well; in others he is asked if he took them out, if he burned them, if he made a counter spell against the charm. In many hadith he answers "God, He is powerful and great, has already cured me", but in one version that statement is absent and Muhammad is only cured after the charm (a knot) is taken and disassembled—these variants representing to Perho how Muslims don't all believe magic has the same level of power. In the hadith where Muhammad says "God has already cured me", God's power is described as "sufficient to counter the power of magic" and only an outsider/enemy is involved in magic, whereas in the latter hadith "human action" was required to counter the magic.[27] Believers in human action against harmful witchcraft will indicate support for use of "protective spells" and counter spells.[25]

Religious permissibility

Classical period

According to Tobias Nünlist, rather than condemning magic and occultism as whole, Muslim writers on the subject usually distinguished between licit and illicit magical practises.[28] According to Henrik Bogdan, Gordan Djurdjevic, contrary to Western esotericism and occultism, there is no clear conflict between orthodoxy and occultism in Islam.[29] Traditionally, Islam distinguishes between magical miracles bestowed by God as a blessing, and demonic magic. Whether or not sorcery/magic is accessed by acts of piety or disobedience is often seen as an indicator whether sorcery/magic is licit or illicit.

Hadith allows the usage of magic for the purpose of healing as long as they do not contain acts of shirk (lit. associating something [with God]; i.e. polytheism).[12] Another hadith narrates about a practitioner of magic who sought to heal Muhammad from an alleged spirit-possession, but then he meets Muhammad, he learns that Muhammad is inspired by the Holy Spirit and converts to Islam. The story describes the general attitude of magic in Islam: magic is not evil, but inferior to Islam.[4] Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (780-855 CE) "refrained from condemning" those who used magic to heal, to "the same class as sahirs".[30] Tabasi (d. 1089) offered a wide range of rituals to perform sorcery, but also agreed that only magic in accordance with sharia is permissible.[31] Ibn al-Nadim (932-995) -- a "bookish" pious Muslim, concedes the permissibility of white magic and but condemns the practice of black magic. He traces licit magic back to King Solomon (the prophet Sulaimān ibn Dāwūd in Islam) and illicit to Iblis (leader of the devils in Islam). The licit magicians included exorcists. They obeyed Islamic law and invoked God's name. Illicit magicians or sorcerers, controlled by or controlling demons by deeds or offerings that were displeasing to God.[32]:92 According to Ibn Khaldūn, Miracles (karāmāt) , belong to licit magic and are considered gifts of God and distinct from illicit magic (siḥr):[33]

The difference between miracles and magic is this: a miracle is a divine power that arouses in the soul [the ability] to exercise influence. The [worker of miracles] is supported in his activity by the spirit of God. The sorcerer, on the other hand, does his work by himself and with the help of his own psychic power, and, under certain conditions, with the support of devils. The difference between the two concerns the idea, reality, and essence of the matter.[34]

Since the early stages of Islam, Muslim scholars from "multiple theological and legal schools" who disapproved of magic and sorcery did not necessarily consider magic to be evil or sinful, but rather nonsensical or deceptive.[35] Rejection of sorcery by Classical scholars was not based on reason so much as Quranic exegesis. One example is the exegesis on Surah al-Falaq by early scholars, such as Zamakshari (1074–1143).[36] Hanafi jurist Abu Bakr al-Jaṣṣās, argued that if magic was actually real, it's practitioners would be rich and powerful rather than impoverished hustlers of common people in the marketplace.[35] Al-Jahiz's Kitāb al-Hayawān offers a variety of psychological explanations for alleged encounters with jinn (ghul) and devils (waswas). [37] The Mu'tazilite rationalists held that magic and sorcery is mere image-making without reality.[38] Ibn Sina (c. 980–1037) and Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (1149 or 1150–1209), describe magic as merely a tool with the outcome of an act of magic determining whether it is legitimate or not.[31] Al-Razi (c. 1150–1209) "includes under sorcery the use (isti'ana, seeking help) of the hidden properties (khawass) of foodstuffs, medicines and unguents"; but traditional medicines are both widely practiced in the Islamic world and "never subject to religious censorship".[39]

Contemporary period

Criticism on the supernatural was adopted in modern times. Salafi scholars, such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Muhammad Asad, and Sayyid Qutb, reject magic and associated traditions, interpreting references to sorcery and witchcraft in a metaphorical way.[40]

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792), founder of Wahhabism, considered sorcery as one of the few sins where killing was a "divinely sanctioned punishment".[41] 20th century scholar Muhammad Nasiruddin al-Albani stated that those who have "the conviction that sorcery has effect of its own accord, and not because of God's decision and will", will not enter paradise.[39]

As of 2013, "stricter laws, arrests, and executions have resulted in efforts to deter magical practices" in "Afghanistan, Gaza, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia".[42] According to Ahmed Ferky Ibrahim, (professor of Islamic law at McGill University), while "capital punishment for magic is rooted in Islamic history", it was seldom applied historically. "When you read 16th- through 19th-century Ottoman court records, for instance, you realize there was no inquisition of magicians, no witch hunts, as was the case in Christian Europe ...The frequent persecution of magicians is indeed a recent phenomenon".[15] Sorcery is also a crime in Nigeria. Wahhabi preacher Bilal Philips has attempted to distinguish between allowed and forbidden use of magic by referring to a

hadith where a surah with supposedly supernatural properties were recited but not written down and used as charms.

On an occasion when a spell had been cast on him, [Prophet Muhammad] told Ali ibn Abi Talib to recite the two chapters [al-Falaq and an-Nas] verse by verse, and when he became ill he used to recite them on himself[43]

as an example of licit magic and noted that Muhammad "did not write them down and hang them around his neck, tie them on his arm or around his waist", as examples of what is illicit.[44]

Modern Asharites and Maturidites usually argue against the rejection of magic and a distinction between the natural and supernatural in general. Adhering to Occasionalism, there would be no restriction on God designing the natural law. God could deviate from the generally assumed order and bestow magical abilities on someone anytime and changing natural laws. Asserting that only God's will exists, they reject the dichotomy of supernatural and natural.[45]

In contemporary Shia Islam, the cleric Sayyid Abdul Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi, considers the ability to perform licit magic to happen because of great "piety and abstinence". The miracle worker must "invoking the name of God", is "the most righteous and knowledgeable person of his time", and "does not claim to be a prophet". [46]

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Divination

In the early and classical Islamic world divination (gaining information about future events or things unseen by occult methods)[47] encompassed a range of techniques, "grouped roughly" into those "largely intuitive" (for example, water diviners observed the behaviour of animals, such as the hoopoe, to discover "the presence of underground water") [48] and those employing "numerical or mechanical methods". [47] interpreting the will of God by examining "the conformation of animal parts"; the patterns appearing on the "surface of water, oil, or ink, (hydromancy); dream interpretation (oneiromancy); [49] "Few details remain of the specific methods" used in these intuitive techniques. [48] Predicting changes in weather patterns "based on the visibility of important star-groups", was the subject of a tract by al-Kindi c. 801–873 CE) and another tract "is still in circulation today, at least in Iraq". [50]

Historian Emilie Savage-Smith[18] translates divination from the term Kaḥanat. Divination (i.e. "prediction of future events or gaining information about things unseen"[47] by way of an occultic, standardized process or ritual), has been called "a branch of magic" by "Muslim encyclopedists, such as al-Afkānī, Tāshköprüzade, and Ḥājjī Khalīfah".[3]

Toufic Fahd describes the difference between divination and magic as blurred. Both share a "practical and nontheoretical character"; use "supernatural means to predict natural elements", and share the technique of obtaining knowledge from "demonic inspiration"; but in "Islamic magical literature", the two "run parallel without mingling".[3]

In modern times in the Middle East, "fortunetelling", according to Dawn Perlmutter,

focuses more on spiritual protection and family counseling than prediction and prophecy. In addition to reading cards, dice, palms, and coffee grounds, activities include selling amulets to ward off evil spirits and providing advice for marital problems. In Afghanistan, fortunetellers operate out of small shops or outside of mosques and shrines across the country but are rarely consulted to portend the future; most often their clients are women or the elderly seeking guidance for problems affecting their families.[42]

In Iran and Pakistan this fortunetelling is also widespread.[42]

Physiognomy

Divining using "specific parts of the human body" (physiognomy), such as twitching eyelids or other involuntary movements, "the shape and appearance of the hands, joints, and nails" (ʿilm al-kaff) and chiromancy or palmistry (employing lines on the hands - ʿilm al-asārīr), "were, and still are popular" in the Muslim world.[51] Physiognomy does not try to align "physical characteristics with character traits" but to use them to read the future. Twitching eyelids, for example, would not indicate a nervous personality but might foretell "the success or failure of an enterprise".[51]

Astrology

Main article: Islam and astrology

In Islamic history, Astrology (ʿilm al-nujūm, "the science of the stars"), was "by far" the most popular of the "numerous practices attempting to foretell future events or discern hidden things", according to Savage-Smith.[52] It has several sub categories:

the relatively simple "non-horoscopic astrology" that involves "the prediction of events based upon the rising or setting of certain star groups";
"judicial astrology" involving "calculating the positions of planets and the mathematical production of horoscopes"
to determine the fate of individuals, countries, or dynasties,
of "auspicious and inauspicious days"; and
to answer specific questions—the location of lost objects, buried treasure, or "the diagnosis and prognosis of disease".[52]

Conjuration

According to various folktales, it is possible for a pious person to summon jinn, spirits, or devils and force them to do their biddings. This practice derives from the Islamic legend of the prophet Solomon.[53]

Some magical practice attempt to bring spirits, angels, jinn, and devils, at the magicians service. Istinzāl refers to the practice of making angels and jinn perceptible.[54] However, only the prophets could perceive the celestial angels. According to Ḥāḍḍjī K̲halīfa ordinary humans could only perceive the terrestrial angels and even this is disputed.[54]

Sortilege

Sortilege, or practice of casting lots and interpreting the results produced by chance (qur'a), was used both to predict the future, and "as a means of determining a course of action or deciding between courses of action".[55] While casting lots was "considered legitimate" in Islam, according to Savage-Smith, two practices involving chance are prohibited by the Quran:

istiqsam—a pre-Islamic "use of rods to settle disputes or give simple omens";[55] maysir ("the game of the left-handed"), "involving arrows and the slaughtering of animals".[55]

Letter number interpretation

Using the "numerical values of letters" to form a word (ʿilm al-ḥurūf) has been used as divination. Treatises on divination maintained that "the victor and vanquished" of some battle or event could be determined by "calculating the numerical value of the names of the contenders, dividing each by nine, and finding the remainders on the chart".[56] More complicated techniques involved combining the letters of one of the 99 names of God "with those of the name of the desired object" (jafr). An "even more" complicated form involved creating an "intricate circular chart ... concentric circles, letters of the alphabet, elements of astrology, and poetry" and calculating "the degree of the ecliptic on the eastern horizon".[56]

Quranic treatment

"Quranic treatment" is made up of practices based "exclusively" on "reciting Qur'anic texts, and defining exactly what this implies". Elements of the 'Qur'anic treatment include "talking about the patient's troubles", recitation of ruqyah[57]—i.e specific Quranic verses (and dua) (see notes below) and prolonging the treatment "if no progress is observed".[58] Though based on revealed scripture and religious belief, parts of the treatment also have "obvious psychotherapeutic value"—recitation of scripture the patient believes to be divine, emphasis on the patient talking about their problems, "repetition of simple rituals within a well-defined time schedule over a certain period of time"[58]—and as of 2005, was "highly fashionable" even among the Muslim elite in places like Cairo.[58]

Works about magic

Ibn al-Nadim, Muslim scholar of his Kitāb al-Fihrist, describes a book that lists 70 'afārīt led by Fuqtus (Arabic: فُقْتُس), including several 'afārīt appointed over each day of the week.[53][59](p38) A collection of late 14th- or early 15th-century magico-medical manuscripts from Ocaña, Spain describes a different set of 72 jinn (termed "Tayaliq") again under Fuqtus (here named "Fayqaytūš" or Fiqitush), blaming them for various ailments.[60][61] According to these manuscripts, each jinni was brought before King Solomon and ordered to divulge their "corruption" and "residence" while the jinn-king Fiqitush gave Solomon a recipe for curing the ailments associated with each jinni as they confessed their transgressions.[62]

As a "good representative" of the kind of literature attacking the practice of magic,[63] Kruk cites a popular, widely available book (al-Sarim al-Battar fi tasaddi li-l-sahara al-ashrar), on "how to deal with sorcery and its evil effects", written from a Wahhabi viewpoint, by Saudi shaykh Wahid 'Abd al-Salam (or Ibn al-Salam) Bali. [Note 2] The book calls for

treating sihr al-junan (madness-sorcery), sihr al-khumul (apathy-sorcery), various sexual afflictions, by incantations to drive out the jinn that is occupying the victim's brain or other parts of his body;[64] or

treating inability to have intercourse with your wife by urinating on the heated blade of a sharp axe.[65]

treating a stomach ache by drinking water "over which Qur'anic passages have been recited".[64]

describing sihr al-nazif (sorcery which allegedly causes vaginal bleeding outside menstruation and may go on for months) as being brought about by 'a trampling of the devil on one of the veins in the womb'. Its treatment is drinking water over which a "Qur'anic incantation has been recited", and taking baths in the water "for three days".

[66]

treating the evil eye (which is not caused by jinn) with "ritual bathing" and "pious incantations".[67]

"foremost" among the ruqa (spells and incantations) allowed to be recited into the ear of the afflicted by Islamic healers is the ruqya; an incantation made up of 41 "Quranic verses, formulas and short chapters".[Note 3]

Shia cleric Sayyid Abdul Husayn Dastghaib Shirazi, who states on his webpage on Al-Islam that "a Muslim who indulges in magic and does not repent is punished by death", [46] goes on to affirm that "many" Islamic jurists are of the opinion that "countering one magic spell by another is permitted", and gives examples of how

"Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (the first Shia Imam and fourth Rashidun caliph) told a victim of witchcraft to carry a prayer of invocation/supplication written "on the skin of deer" and always keep it with him;[46]

how Abbas the Safawid compelled a Christian to convert to Islam using tasbih (prayer beads) "made of dust from Imam Husain (a.s.)'s grave",[46] (both sounding very much like magic charms).

In Muslim society

Share of population group believing in witchcraft, based on PEW Surveys from 2008 to 2017[69]

According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in 2011–2012 of Muslims around the world,[70] a majority of Muslims surveyed in the Middle East North Africa, Turkey, South Asia, and Southeast Asia believe in Jinn—However, less than 20% of those surveyed thought that making offerings to jinn was an "acceptable part of Islamic tradition". Belief in talismans, witchcraft and spiritual healers, was not as widespread, ranging from one half to a quarter of Muslims in these regions. More religious Muslims are more likely to believe in the existence of jinn (spirits), talismans and other supernatural entities such as angels.[71]

A study by Boris Gershman based on surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center (PRC) between 2008 and 2017 of 95 countries (predominantly in the Muslim world, Europe and the Western Hemisphere) found that more than half of Muslims believed in witchcraft (a higher rate than Christians and even higher than religiously unaffiliated respondents), and that the more religious the person surveyed was the more likely they were to believe in witchcraft.[69]

According to Dawn Perlmutter, writing in 2013, "an entire industry of professional exorcists" has arisen in "the Middle East and among Western Muslims", performing Qur'anic healing, posting on YouTube and advertising on Facebook and Twitter. In Islamic literature there are detailed treatises that include "entire exorcism rites and purification rituals for the destruction of amulets and other magical items" to neutralize black magic.[42]

Popular practices v. religious orthodoxy

Branches of magic

Some of "the more commonly used branches" of the art of magic listed by Dastghaib Shirazi and/or schools of the occult listed by the Ottoman-Turkic theologian

Taşköprüzade:

‘Ilm akham an nugum—Astrology

‘Ilm as-Simiya—combines "will-power with particular physical and material forces for manipulating the natural order", and includes "eye-enchancement".[46] Magic based on imagination, such as enchantments and magic of letters.[72]

‘Ilm al-Limiya or "the knowledge of subjugation of the spirits"—uses the psyche to bring "higher and stronger spirits" (such as "the spirits of the stars") under the control of the magician.[46]

‘Ilm al-Himiya or talisman—combines "the powers of the higher spiritual world" with the base elements of nature to "produce awe-inspiring effect".[46]

‘Ilm ar-Rimiya or ash-Sha'badhah—such as "sleight of hand, jugglery", creates the illusion of super-natural effects.[46]

‘Ilm al-firasa—Predicting the character of a person by his outer appearance.[72]

‘Ilm ta’bir ar-ru’ya—Interpreting dreams[72]

‘Ilm at-tillasmāt—Talisman[72]

Supplementary fields of magic are:

‘Ilm al-Kimiya or alchemy—the transmuting (i.e. the attempt to transmute) base metals into gold or silver.[46][72]

‘Ilm al-Khafiya or the hidden knowledge—discovers the names of "the angels or the satans" to be used to invoke those beings.[46]

Still others are:

‘Ilm Shoabada—is the creating of an illusion (such as by moving a burning ball in circles so that it appears to be a circle of fire).

‘Ilm Taskhirāt—"the method of controlling Angels, Jinns, souls or various wild animals".

‘Ilm Qayafa—the art of determining the lineage of an individual by use of magic.[46]

Scholar Remke Kruk found books on magic and sorcery "extremely well represented" in "street stalls and bookshops" in the Muslim world from Marrakesh to Cairo to Yemen circa 2005. Practical handbooks on the subject were common, but with the "conservative" (called "orthodox" by Kruk) Islamic revival, "religious pamphlets condemning various practices" also became popular, starting around 1990.[73] G. Hussein Rassool states that

Throughout the Muslim world, there are sorcerers, fortune tellers and traditional healers; many are in violation of interpretations of the Shari’ah (Islamic law). This leads the magicians or healers that use magic or witchcraft into the realm of major Shirk which refers to the association of a partner with Allah, the summoning other than God and relying on others beside Allah.[1]

Kruk writes that "over the centuries" the Islamic scholars of "official Islam" have worked to forbid magical practices, but despite their efforts magic practices have "become intricately interwoven with religious elements and practices" in Islamic culture. Consequently, the line between forbidden and allowed "is so blurred that neither the practitioner nor the client" are often aware of when they are crossing that line.[2]

On the one hand, practices approved by strict Islamic conservatives (called "orthodox" by Kruk) and revivalists to counteract magic include things like the use of water "over which the Quran has been recited" or to which have been added "salt, rose essence, oil of black caraway, or the leaves of the lote tree". On the other, in traditionally practised "magic and sorcery" now under attack from those strict conservatives, recitation of the 99 names of God and verses of the Quran play "a major part".[73]

The practice of many Islamic healers who claim to talk to jinn for the purpose of curing and preventing the evil eye and exorcism of possession by jinn, is believed to be the extremely serious sin of shirk by some conservative Muslims. Kruk points out how fine the differences between approved and disapproved practices can be—it is acceptable to get in touch with jinn "in exorcisms" to threaten them, but it is shirk to ask their help in a

healing;[74][75] dissolving Quranic texts written on paper in water is forbidden, but "writing in bowls with ink that is washed off by the water poured into the bowl", is recommended by the well known conservative, Wahabbi-oriented cleric Wahid 'Abd al-Salam Bali.[68] Kruk worries that the rise of stricter forms of Islam has led to an attack on healing "practices that used to be well integrated into Islamic life".[63]

Afghanistan

Religious clerics (mullah) are consulted to ward off evil magic by means of good magic.[76] Practitioners of black magic are said to rely upon evil spirits to cast sorcery, whereas the cleric use shamanistic rites in order to combat evil.[76] Furthermore, there are several demonic creatures supposedly harassing the Afghan life, including jinn, ghosts, and demons.[76] White magic is used to defend against such spirits and referred to as nuri (divine light), whereas evil magic is related to Satan and called nari (fiery).[76]

Malaysia

Malays make a distinction between white and black magic. The latter falls within the fields of Islam and does not violate any Islamic principle.[77] It relies on Islamic purity rituals such as Islamic chanting (dhikr), the Quran, and mastery of the soul.[77] Sorcery, on the other hand, are said to fall outside the folds of Islam and believed to call upon either foreign spirits (jinn) —which may include a variety of Indian deities—[78] or the devils of the Islamic religion (shayāṭīn).[77] Others also believe that magic roots in the intention (niyet) of a magically gifted person; either to heal or to harm.[77]

Saudi Arabia

In Saudi Arabia (prior to the reign of Muhammad bin Salman), Harry Potter books were "forbidden" and men and women who tend to be drawn from expatriate communities have been beheaded on charges of sorcery.[15] In 2009, a special "Anti-Witchcraft Unit" was "created and formalized", not only to investigate and pursue alleged witches, but to "neutralize their cursed paraphernalia, and disarm their spells". In that year, in just one region (Makkah) alone, "at least 118 people were charged with 'practicing magic' or 'using the book of Allah in a derogatory manner'".[79] By 2011, the Anti-Witchcraft Unit had established nine witchcraft-fighting bureaus in cities across the Saudi, and processed "at least 586 cases of magical crime". In 2007, an Egyptian pharmacist, Mustafa Ibrahim, was beheaded in Riyadh after being convicted on charges of "practicing magic and sorcery" as well as other charges.[79] In 2008, police went to the trouble of luring a well-known Lebanese television psychic, Ali Hussain Sibat, into a sting operation while he was in Saudi on hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca). He was sentenced to death but had his sentence reduced to 15 years in prison[42] "after outcry from international human rights organizations".[80] In September 2011 a Sudanese man was beheaded, having been caught in another sting operation "set in motion by the religious police".[42] Human rights workers allege that accused in Saudi Arabia are often foreign domestic workers from Africa and Southeast Asia who often are simply practicing folk medicine from their country or who are charged with witchcraft by their employers in retaliation for taking those employers to court for refusal to pay wages.[79] (The power of the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and Promotion of Virtue that oversees the

anti-witchcraft unit has been sharply curtailed under the reign of crown prince Muhammad bin Salman.)

Iran

In Iran in 2011, 25 advisers and aides of the then President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his chief of staff Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei were arrested on charges of practising sorcery and black magic.[81][42] According to "the top sorcerer among Iran's ruling elite" (top "according to associates clients and government officials"),[82] Ahmadinejad met with him "at least twice" (Ahmadinejad denies the charges), and was just one among "dozens" of high Iranian government officials" who consult him on "matters of national security". The "top" sorcerer (claims to) regularly contact Jinn who "work for Israel's intelligence agency, the Mossad, and for the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency", and has had 'a long battle to infiltrate the Israeli jinn and find out what they know.'"[82] [79][83] The sorcerer also claimed that not only did jinn work for the U.S. and Israel, but that some were being used by him "to infiltrate" Israeli and U.S. intelligence agencies. [42]

Gaza

In Gaza, exorcism is not illegal but treated with considerable suspicion by the Islamist ruling Hamas party, which claimed to have "exposed thirty cases of fraud" in one year, 2010.[42]

Dubai

The BBC relates the story of a charismatic Mali-born confidence artist (Foutanga Babani Sissoko) who convinced the bank manager at Dubai Islamic Bank (Mohammed Ayoub) that he, Sissoko, using black magic, "could take a sum of money and double it" ("... he saw lights and smoke. He heard the voices of spirits. Then there was silence"). Between 1995 and 1998 Ayoub made 183 transfers into bank accounts of Sissoko—eventually totaling 890 million dirhams or \$242 million—"expected it to come back in double the amount." However, after a time the Bank's auditors "began to notice that something was wrong" and Sissoko (who had left Dubai for the U.S. and then Mali) stopped answering Ayoub's calls. Eventually the Dubai government covered the banks losses and Ayoub was convicted of fraud and sentenced to three years in prison. Rumour had it "he was also forced to undergo an exorcism, to cure him of his belief in black magic." [84]

Pakistan

In Pakistan it is common to slaughter an animal to ward off evil and bad luck, it is especially efficacious is sacrificing a black goat. In December 2016, after 48 people died in the crash of a propeller-driven Pakistan International Airlines plane, a group of airline staff were seen slaughtering a black goat on the tarmac of Islamabad's airport.[85] This practice is not restricted to the lower echelon of Pakistani society. When he was President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari had a black goat sacrificed at his house every day to ward off black magic and the evil eye.[86] (61% of Pakistani Muslim surveyed believe in the evil eye according to a 2012 Pew report.)[71] Zardari was also known to seek the advice of a spiritual healer on when and where it was auspicious to travel.[85]

See also

Alchemy in the medieval Islamic world

Astrology in the medieval Islamic world – Islamic astrology of the Golden Age

Islam and astrology

Simiyya – Doctrine of Sufism

Spirit possession and exorcism in Islam – Belief in Islam of possession by spirits and of their exorcism

Sufism – Body of mystical practice within Islam

Superstitions in Muslim societies

Witchcraft and divination in the Hebrew Bible

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Notes

The root sin-ha-ra Arabic: سحر appears 20 times in the Quran (found with a search of "magic" in English in Dr. Mustafa Khattab, the Clear Quran)[14]

Bali's first book --Wiqayat al-insan min al-jinn wa-l-shaytan -- was more narrowly on the dangers of jinn and how to protect yourself from them

the ruqya consists of the following Qur'anic verses, formulas and short chapters: 1.

a'aidhu-formula; 2. al-Fatiha; 3. a 'iidhu-formula; 4. al-Baqara 1-5; 5. a'aidhu- formula; 6.

al-Baqara 102; 7. a 'aidhu; 8. al-Baqara 163-4; 9. a 'adhu; 10. al-Baqara 285-6; 11.

a'aidhu; 12. al-Baqara 255; 13. a'aidhu; 14. Al-'Imran 18-9; 15. a'adhu; 16. al-A 'raf54,

56; 117-122; 17. 30x the Qur'anic words: waalqd al-sahara sdjidina; 18. a'aidhu; 19.

Yunus 81-2, repeated; 20. a'adhu; 21. Taha 69; 22. a'aidhu; 23. al- Mu'minuna 115-8;

24. a 'aidhu; 25. al-Safat 1-10; 26. a'acdhu; 27. al-Ahqaf29-32; 28. a 'aidhu; 29. al-

Rahman 33-6; 30. a 'aidhu; 31. al- hashr 21-4; 32. a 'aidhu; 33. al-Jann 1-9; 34. a'adhu;

36. basmala; 37. al-Ikhlās; 38. basmala; 39. al-Falaq, repeated a number of times; 40.

basmala; 41. an-Nas [68]

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vte

Magic and witchcraft

Categories: Occultism (Islam)History of magicIslamic lawMagic (supernatural)Religious controversiesSociology of religionWitchcraft

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Part of a series on

Gnosticism

Gnostic concepts

Gnostic sects and founders

Scriptures

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Pistis Sophia (Koine Greek: Πίστις Σοφία) is a Gnostic text discovered in 1773,[1] possibly written between the 3rd[2] and 4th centuries AD.[3] The existing manuscript, which some scholars place in the late 4th century,[4] relates one Gnostic group's teachings of the transfigured Jesus to the assembled disciples, including his mother Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Martha. (In this context, "transfigured" refers to Jesus after his death and resurrection, not the event during his life where he spoke to appearances of Moses and Elijah on a mountain.) In this text, the risen Jesus had spent eleven years speaking with his disciples, teaching them only the lower mysteries. After eleven years, he receives his true garment and is able to reveal the higher mysteries revered by this group. The prized mysteries relate to complex cosmologies and knowledge necessary for the soul to reach the highest divine realms.

Much of the first two books of the manuscript are dedicated to outlining the myth of the

fall and restoration of the figure known as Pistis Sophia, in particular giving detailed parallels between her prayers of repentance and particular Psalms and Odes of Solomon.

Although in many Gnostic texts and systems Sophia is a major female divinity, in Pistis Sophia she originates and dwells outside of the divine realm. Her fall and redemption parallel that found in versions of the Sophia myth such as that in the Apocryphon of John, but the actions all take place in the material aeons, and she can only be restored to her place in the thirteenth aeon, outside the Kingdom of Light.

The Askew Codex

The phrase "Jesus, who is called Aberamentho" in the original Coptic Πίστις Σοφία has been preserved in a single Coptic language manuscript originally comprising 178 leaves of parchment, but currently consisting of 174 leaves. This "Askew Codex" was purchased by the British Museum (now British Library) in 1785 from collector Anthony Askew. The Greek title Πίστις Σοφία was assigned by Carl Gottfried Woide, based on a title at the beginning of Book 2, "The Second Book of the Pistis Sophia," which was added by a later hand. Carl Schmidt suggests Τεύχη τοῦ Σωτῆρος "Books of the Saviour", based on a title found at the end of the same book.[5]

The expression Πίστις Σοφία is obscure, and its English translations varied: "The Wisdom of Faith", "Faith Wisdom", "Wisdom in Faith", or "Faith in Wisdom". To some later Gnostics, Sophia was a divine syzygy of Christ, rather than simply a word meaning wisdom, and this context suggests the interpretation "The Faith of Sophia", or "The Loyalty of Sophia". Both the Berlin Codex and a papyrus codex at Nag Hammadi have an earlier, simpler Sophia wherein the transfigured Christ explains Πίστις obscurely:

Again, his disciples said: "Tell us clearly how they came down from the invisibilities, from the immortal to the world that dies?" The perfect Saviour said: "Son of Man consented with Sophia, his consort, and revealed a great androgynous light. Its male name is designated 'Saviour, begetter of all things'. Its female name is designated 'All-begettress Sophia'. Some call her 'Pistis'".[6]

The work is divided into several parts, with debate as to the number of parts. The most common view is that the work consists of four books,[7] but some have posited as many as five or six books.[8][9][10] Additionally, the codex contains two fragments in a later hand that are not directly connected to any of the main books.

Until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945, the Askew Codex was one of three codices that contained almost all of the Gnostic writings that had survived the suppression of such literature both in East and West, the other two codices being the Bruce Codex and the Berlin Codex. Aside from these primary sources, everything written about gnosticism before the Nag Hammadi library became available is based on quotes, characterizations, and caricatures in the writings of the enemies of Gnosticism.

The purpose of these heresiological writings was polemical, presenting gnostic teachings as absurd, bizarre, and self-serving, and as an aberrant heresy from a proto-orthodox and orthodox Christian standpoint.

Text

Jesus appears to his disciples after the resurrection

The work as a whole shows clear signs of having been compiled from multiple sources, with only the first two books following directly on each other. Even within a single book, occasionally multiple, differing accounts of a single event or cosmological outline appear, suggesting the use and preservation of several sources. Changes in terminology and cosmological description between books also shows that it is a compilation of texts that may have been written over a period of some time.

The bulk of the text (Books 1-3) is in the form of a dialogue between Jesus and the disciples, both male and female. Mary Magdalene is the most featured disciple, who provides many questions and scriptural interpretations; John “the Virgin” is the second most prominent. Other figures named as followers include Andrew, Bartholomew, James, John, Mary the mother of Jesus, Martha, Matthew, Peter, Philip, Salome, Simon the Canaanite, and Thomas.

First Book

The first book (Chapters 1-62) establishes that Jesus remained with the disciples for 11 years after the resurrection, teaching them only the lowest of the mysteries. At a certain point, he ascends and traverses the aeons, defeating the wicked archons, before returning to speak with the disciples further. It connects Jesus’ actions to the effectiveness of astrologers in the world – it suggests he has reduced, but not eliminated, the effectiveness of astrological magic. This leads into the introduction of the myth of Pistis Sophia’s fall and restoration, which takes up the bulk of both the first and second book. Pistis Sophia recites several prayers/repentances, and after each one a disciple interprets the repentance in light of one of the Psalms or Odes of Solomon.

Unlike other versions of the Gnostic myth, such as the Apocryphon of John, here Pistis Sophia is a being of the lower, material aeons. There is solid speculation that this is not in fact the case, and misogyny plays a role in this categorization. She is a high, divine being, and her restoration is not to the realms of light, but only back to her place through the thirteenth aeon. This is significant in distinguishing the theology of this book from other Gnostic systems – it prioritizes its own, distinct cosmology and mythology above the Sophia myth, which to this author represents inferior, material struggles.

Second Book

Jesus with Mary Magdalene

This book makes up Chapters 63-101. After the conclusion of the story of Pistis Sophia, the text turns to lengthy explanations of cosmology and the knowledge offered by the

mysteries of this author's system. The end of the book also suggests the close connection of this work with the Books of Jeu found in the Bruce Codex (Chapter 99).

Third Book

The third book (Chapters 102-135) is mostly concerned with presenting an ethical or lifestyle code for adherents of the text. It outlines what is needed for right thought and right action, as well as actions that are not acceptable and their punishments. It also discusses at length the dissemination of the mysteries, repentance, and when it is or is not permissible to grant the mysteries to others. Finally, it discusses the formation of the human being, its components, and how they are connected. Again the Books of Jeu are referenced (Chapter 134), with the stipulation that they contain mysteries that are necessary for all, including the righteous.

Fourth Book

Part one of this book (Chapters 136-143) deals with cosmological and astrological speculation, and ritual development. It presents a myth of fallen archons of the aeons being imprisoned within the zodiacal sphere; outlines five realms of punishment (the Midst) and the types of sinners each holds; and gives specific configurations of the planets in the zodiac that allow souls to be released from each region. Jesus also interprets the elements of his incarnation and their role in the world, and administers the “baptism of the first offering” to his disciples.

The second part of what is commonly thought of as the fourth book (chapters 144-148) appears after a lacuna in the text, and is probably part of a separate book.[11] Its cosmology is different from the preceding text, and it focuses entirely on the destiny of various types of souls and the punishments of sinners. Some of the sins listed are duplicates from part one of book four, but list different punishments. It is also speculated that an evil being pulled her from the 13th out of envy for her beautiful creations and she has to fight her to get to her home universe. In the end she is successful.

Cosmology

Cosmology is a primary focus of the Pistis Sophia – learning the structure of the universe and how to traverse it is considered key in these texts, and the cosmology is one of the most complex from any Gnostic text remaining today. Summarizing the cosmology is further complicated because the structure is slightly different in each of its separate books, with certain realms added and removed.

Some scholars have suggested cosmologies encompassing the entirety of the codex; [12][13] recently an outline has been made looking at the cosmology of each text individually.[14] A general overview could be seen as:

The Treasury of Light (the place of the right; separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)

The Midst (mesos)

The thirteenth aeon (excluded in Book 3 and part two of Book 4)

The twelve aeons/heimarmene (separate regions in Books 1 & 2 only)

The first sphere (Books 1 & 2 only)

The firmament (Books 1 & 2 only)

Amente (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)

Chaos (Book 3 and part two of Book 4 only)

The Midst (mhte) (Books 3 & 4 only)

The Outer Darkness (Books 3 & 4 only)

Notably, the portion of Books 1 & 2 dealing with the myth of Pistis Sophia's fall and redemption use a different cosmology from the rest of those books. The most controversial point in this alternate cosmological conception is reference to the thirteenth aeon, Pistis Sophia's home, as a place of "righteousness;" this view of the thirteenth aeon is absent from the rest of the text.[15]

In Books 1-3, all the regions except for the punishment realms are also known as the Spaces of the First Mystery, and in Books 1 & 2, all the regions from the thirteenth aeon downward are considered the Outer Darkness.

Generally speaking, the aeonic realms represent the material universe, bounded by the stars and the zodiac. The Midst is the space dividing this region from the upper realms, and is sometimes a waiting space for souls before being allowed to enter the light realms. The goal of the soul is to ascend beyond the aeons and enter the upper realms of light. This is achieved by receiving the mysteries offered by the group represented by these texts.

The mysteries are not explicitly listed in the text; an initiate would most likely have to prove him or herself worthy by living for some period according to the ethical guidelines provided in the texts before undergoing the baptisms and gaining access to the mysteries. The Books of Jeu are noted as a source of the mysteries; it is probable that the texts found in the Bruce Codex are very similar, if not identical, with these texts.

Key figures

Pistis Sophia

The story of Pistis Sophia's fall and restoration (chapters 29-82) dominates much of Books 1 & 2. She dwells in the thirteenth aeon, is tricked into leaving her aeon and descending into Chaos, has her light-power stolen, and is not allowed to return to her place until Jesus ascends through the aeons. She recites many repentances and prayers, and is repeatedly persecuted by wicked archontic beings before being allowed to wait just outside of the thirteenth aeon for restoration.[citation needed]

It is noteworthy that she is not a divine being, as portrayed in other versions of the Gnostic myth such as the Apocryphon of John. She is a being of the material aeons, and her restoration is only as far as the thirteenth material aeon. The myth as a whole seems to have been adopted to address the beliefs of another Gnostic group, and to assert the superiority of this text's system: humans who receive the mysteries of this group can surpass Pistis Sophia and reach the divine realms of light.[citation needed]

Authades

Authades is the equivalent of Ialdabaoth/the demiurge in versions of the Sophia myth such as that found in the Apocryphon of John. Unlike Ialdabaoth, he is not created by the Sophia figure, and in fact he holds a slightly higher hierarchical position than Pistis Sophia. His sin is wishing to rule all the material aeons, and he grows jealous when Pistis Sophia chooses to worship the light rather than continuing the ways of the aeons. Authades appears only in the chapters dealing with the Sophia myth; elsewhere Sabaoth the Adamas is the representative of evil in these texts.[citation needed]

Jesus

Jesus serves as a teacher or instructor, teaching his disciples information about the divine world they will need to progress to a higher state of being, as well as knowledge of the cosmic realms, their inhabitants, and their functions. He teaches the disciples baptismal rites, and instructs them to give these rites to all who show themselves worthy. He is closely tied to the highest divine being. However, little significance is given to his earthly incarnation – the ritual bread and wine in the baptism is not associated with the Christian Eucharist, and the crucifixion and resurrection play little role. Here, he only gains his true garment and teaches the disciples the higher mysteries eleven years after his resurrection – downplaying versions of Christianity claiming his earlier teachings as ultimate truth.[citation needed]

Jeu

This is the demiurge of these texts. Jeu dwells in the Treasury of Light and organizes the cosmos. He places the archons and the aeons in their proper places, and assigns powers to the planets, effectively offering a divine origin for astrology. This is particularly noteworthy given the anti-cosmic nature of some other Gnostic groups.[citation needed]

He is sometimes referred to as the “Father of Jesus’ Father.” Jeu is considered the father of the Great Sabaoth, the Good, who provides the soul to Jesus’ earthly incarnation – thus Jeu is the father of Jesus’ earthly father. The divine Jesus’ true father remains the highest, ineffable God.[citation needed]

Zorokothora Melchisedek

Often referred to simply as Melchisedek, this figure also dwells in the Treasury of Light or Place of the Right. His primary role is overseeing transport of light from the lower realms to the higher light realms as it becomes purified. His subordinates also deliver certain souls out of the punishment regions when believers on Earth pray for them. [citation needed]

The Great Sabaoth, the Good

As mentioned above, this figure provides a power or soul for Jesus’ earthly incarnation, making him effectively Jesus’ earthly father. This role is most widely discussed through extensive interpretations of Psalm 85:10-11 in Chapters 62-63.[citation needed]

Sabaoth, the Adamas

This is the primary representative of evil or wickedness in the majority of the Pistis Sophia. He is accused of inappropriate sexual conduct, begetting archons and other beings, and as a result he is imprisoned in the bounds of the zodiac, or the material universe. For those human souls who did not receive the mysteries before death and are thus bound to be reincarnated in the world, he is also responsible for giving the “cup of forgetfulness,” denying them the knowledge they had acquired from previous lives and punishments.[citation needed]

Editions of the Coptic text

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In 2012 Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi published letters from Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in which he exposed corruption that caused the Holy See to pay increased prices for contracts.

During the following months, the situation intensified as documents were leaked to Italian journalists, revealing power struggles inside the Vatican due to its efforts to implement greater financial transparency and comply with international norms to fight money laundering. In early 2012, an anonymous letter made newspaper headlines for its warning of a death threat against Pope Benedict XVI.[1] The scandal increased in May 2012 when Nuzzi published a book entitled *His Holiness: The Secret Papers of Benedict XVI* consisting of confidential letters and memos between Pope Benedict and his personal secretary, a controversial book that describes the Vatican as riven with jealousy, intrigue and factional fighting.[2] The book reveals details about the Pope's personal finances and includes tales of bribes made to procure an audience with him.

Leaks

The scandal was first revealed during late January 2012 by a television program named *The Untouchables* (*Gli intoccabili*), broadcast in Italy by La7,[3] and increased during May 2012 when Gianluigi Nuzzi published a book entitled *His Holiness: The Secret Papers of Benedict XVI* consisting of confidential letters and memorandums.[2]

Among the documents were letters written both to the Pope and to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, by then apostolic nuncio to the United States, Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, complaining of corruption in Vatican finances and a campaign of defamation against him. Viganò, formerly the second-ranked Vatican administrator to the Pope, allegedly asked not to be transferred for having exposed corruption that cost the Holy See artificially high contract prices.[4]

An anonymous document described a conversation with Cardinal Paolo Romeo of Palermo, Sicily, in which he allegedly predicted the Pope would be dead within twelve months. According to John L. Allen Jr., none of the information leaked seemed "especially fatal". "It's not so much the content of the leaks, but the fact of them, which is the real problem".[5]

Vatican internal investigation

The Vatican investigation of the leaks worked along several tracks, with Vatican magistrates pursuing the criminal investigation and the Vatican Secretariat of State an administrative investigation. In March 2012, Pope Benedict appointed a commission of cardinals to investigate the leaks. The three cardinals appointed by Benedict acted in a supervisory role, examining more than the narrow criminal scope of the leaks and interviewing much of the Vatican bureaucracy; they purportedly discovered a sex and

blackmail scandal.[6] They reported directly to the Pope, and could both share information with Vatican prosecutors and receive information from them, according to Vatican spokesman the Reverend Federico Lombardi. The group was directed by Cardinal Julián Herranz Casado, an Opus Dei prelate who headed the Vatican's legal office as well as the disciplinary commission of the Vatican bureaucracy before retiring.[7]

Papal response

On 30 May 2012, Pope Benedict made his first direct comments on the scandal in remarks at the end of his weekly general audience. He said the "exaggerated" and "gratuitous" rumours had offered a false image of the Holy See, commenting: "The events of recent days about the Curia and my collaborators have brought sadness in my heart. ...I want to renew my trust in and encouragement of my closest collaborators and all those who every day, with loyalty and a spirit of sacrifice and in silence, help me fulfill my ministry."[8]

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In 2012 Italian journalist Gianluigi Nuzzi published letters from Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò in which he exposed corruption that caused the Holy See to pay increased prices for contracts.

During the following months, the situation intensified as documents were leaked to Italian journalists, revealing power struggles inside the Vatican due to its efforts to implement greater financial transparency and comply with international norms to fight money laundering. In early 2012, an anonymous letter made newspaper headlines for its warning of a death threat against Pope Benedict XVI.[1] The scandal increased in May 2012 when Nuzzi published a book entitled His Holiness: The Secret Papers of Benedict XVI consisting of confidential letters and memos between Pope Benedict and his personal secretary, a controversial book that describes the Vatican as riven with jealousy, intrigue and factional fighting.[2] The book reveals details about the Pope's personal finances and includes tales of bribes made to procure an audience with him.

[Leaks](#)

The scandal was first revealed during late January 2012 by a television program named The Untouchables (Gli intoccabili), broadcast in Italy by La7,[3] and increased during May 2012 when Gianluigi Nuzzi published a book entitled His Holiness: The Secret Papers of Benedict XVI consisting of confidential letters and memorandums.[2]

Among the documents were letters written both to the Pope and to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, by then apostolic nuncio to the United States, Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, complaining of corruption in Vatican finances and a campaign of defamation against him. Viganò, formerly the second-ranked Vatican administrator to the Pope, allegedly asked not to be transferred for having exposed

corruption that cost the Holy See artificially high contract prices.[4]

An anonymous document described a conversation with Cardinal Paolo Romeo of Palermo, Sicily, in which he allegedly predicted the Pope would be dead within twelve months. According to John L. Allen Jr., none of the information leaked seemed "especially fatal". "It's not so much the content of the leaks, but the fact of them, which is the real problem".[5]

Vatican internal investigation

The Vatican investigation of the leaks worked along several tracks, with Vatican magistrates pursuing the criminal investigation and the Vatican Secretariat of State an administrative investigation. In March 2012, Pope Benedict appointed a commission of cardinals to investigate the leaks. The three cardinals appointed by Benedict acted in a supervisory role, examining more than the narrow criminal scope of the leaks and interviewing much of the Vatican bureaucracy; they purportedly discovered a sex and blackmail scandal.[6] They reported directly to the Pope, and could both share information with Vatican prosecutors and receive information from them, according to Vatican spokesman the Reverend Federico Lombardi. The group was directed by Cardinal Julián Herranz Casado, an Opus Dei prelate who headed the Vatican's legal office as well as the disciplinary commission of the Vatican bureaucracy before retiring. [7]

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Afro-Caribbean religious systems, also known as Afro-diasporic religions, are spiritual traditions that emerged among the descendants of enslaved Africans in the Americas and Caribbean, blending African beliefs with elements of Roman Catholicism. Key examples include Vodou, Ifá, and Santería.

[Key Systems](#)

Vodou (Haitian): Originating in Haiti, Vodou is rooted in the beliefs of the Fon and Ewe peoples of West Africa. Practitioners worship a pantheon of spirits called lwa through drumming, dancing, and spirit possession rituals. It incorporates Catholic elements and played a significant role in the Haitian Revolution.

Ifá (Yoruba): Ifá is a complex system of divination and a traditional Yoruba religion from West Africa. It is considered the "root" of many Afro-Caribbean religions and focuses on aligning human destiny (ori) with the will of the supreme creator (Olodumare) and the guidance of the orishas. Ifá priests (babalawos) use specific tools like the Opele chain or

Ikin nuts on an Opon Ifá (divination tray).

Santería (also known as La Regla de Ocha or Lucumí): Developed in Cuba, Santería is a syncretic religion that merges the Yoruba orisha worship with Spanish Catholicism. Enslaved Africans in Cuba preserved their traditions by associating their deities (orishas like Oshun, Shango, and Yemaya) with Catholic saints, an adaptation that allowed their survival under colonial rule. It features complex rituals, music with bata drums, and an extensive system of herbal medicine.

Other Notable Systems

Candomblé: A major Afro-Brazilian religion centered around the worship of orishas.

While similar to Santería, it developed in Brazil and has some differences in names and characteristics.

Palo Mayombe: An African-derived system, primarily from the Congo region, that is practiced in Cuba and other parts of the diaspora. It often involves working with spirits of the dead.

Hoodoo/Rootwork: A spiritual practice originating in the Southern United States that focuses more on practical magic, herbal medicine, and rootwork rather than a formalized religion or church structure.

These diverse traditions represent the resilience of African spirituality, adapting and thriving in new contexts despite centuries of oppression and misrepresentation. Many practitioners today continue to follow these traditions, seeking balance and harmony with the spiritual world.

Santería - Wikipedia

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A group of Santería practitioners performing the Cajón de Muertos ceremony in Havana in 2011

Santería (Spanish pronunciation: [san.te.'ri.a]), also known as Regla de Ocha, Regla Lucumí, or Lucumí, is an African diaspora religion that developed in Cuba during the late 19th century. It arose amid a process of syncretism between the traditional Yoruba religion of West Africa, Catholicism, and Spiritism. There is no central authority in control of Santería and much diversity exists among practitioners, who are known as *creyentes* ('believers').

Santería teaches the existence of a transcendent creator divinity, Olodumare, under whom are spirits known as *oricha*. Typically deriving their names and attributes from traditional Yoruba deities, these *oricha* are equated with Roman Catholic saints and associated with various myths. Each human is deemed to have a personal link to a particular *oricha* who influences their personality. Olodumare is believed to be the ultimate source of *aché*, a supernatural force permeating the universe that can be manipulated through ritual actions. Practitioners venerate the *oricha* at altars, either in the home or in the *ilé* (house-temple), which is run by a *santero* (priest) or *santera* (priestess). Membership of the *ilé* requires initiation. Offerings to the *oricha* include fruit, liquor, flowers and sacrificed animals. A central ritual is the *toque de santo*, in which practitioners drum, sing, and dance to encourage an *oricha* to possess one of their members and thus communicate with them. Several forms of divination are used, including *Ifá*, to decipher messages from the *oricha*. Offerings are also given to the spirits of the dead, with some practitioners identifying as spirit mediums. Healing rituals and the preparation of herbal remedies and talismans also play a prominent role.

Santería developed among Afro-Cuban communities following the Atlantic slave trade of the 16th to 19th centuries. It formed through the blending of the traditional religions brought to Cuba by enslaved West Africans, the majority of them Yoruba, and Roman Catholicism, the only religion legally permitted on the island by the Spanish colonial government. In urban areas of West Cuba, these traditions merged with Spiritist ideas to form the earliest *ilés* during the late 19th century. After the Cuban War of Independence resulted in an independent republic in 1898, its new constitution enshrined freedom of religion. Santería nevertheless remained marginalized by Cuba's Roman Catholic, Euro-Cuban establishment, which typically viewed it as *brujería* (witchcraft). In the 1960s, growing emigration following the Cuban Revolution spread Santería abroad. The late 20th century saw growing links between Santería and related traditions in West Africa

and the Americas, such as Haitian Vodou and Brazilian Candomblé. Since the late 20th century, some practitioners have emphasized a "Yorubization" process to remove Roman Catholic influences and created forms of Santería closer to traditional Yoruba religion.

Practitioners of Santería are primarily found in Cuba's La Habana and Matanzas provinces, although communities exist across the island and abroad, especially among the Cuban diasporas of Mexico and the United States. The religion remains most common among working-class Afro-Cuban communities although is also practiced by individuals of other class and ethnic backgrounds. The number of initiates is estimated to be in the high hundreds of thousands. These initiates serve as diviners and healers for a much larger range of adherents of varying levels of fidelity, making the precise numbers of those involved in Santería difficult to determine. Many of those involved also identify as practitioners of another religion, typically Roman Catholicism.

Definitions

A figure at the Templo Yemalla, an ilé (house of worship) devoted to the oricha Yemaja in Trinidad, Cuba

The term Santería translates into English as the 'way of the saints'.^[1] This term was first used by scholarly commentators in the 1930s and later spread among the religion's practitioners themselves.^[2] It has become the most popular name for the religion, although some practitioners find it offensive.^[3] A common alternative is Regla de Ocha, meaning 'the rule of ocha',^[4] ocha being a term for the religion's deities.^[5] Some adherents regard this as the religion's "official" name.^[3] The tradition has also been called Lucumí, in reference to the colonial Spanish term for the Yoruba people,^[6] or alternatively La Religión Lucumí ('the Lucumí religion')^[7] or Regla Lucumí ("the rule of Lucumí").^[8]

Santería is an Afro-Caribbean religion,^[9] and more specifically an Afro-Cuban religion.^[10] In Cuba it is sometimes described as "the national religion",^[11] although it has also spread abroad.^[12] Santería's roots are in the traditional religions brought to Cuba by enslaved West Africans, the majority of them Yoruba, between the 16th and 19th centuries. In Cuba, these religions mixed with the Roman Catholicism introduced by Spanish colonialists.^[13] Roman Catholic saints were conflated with West African deities,^[14] while enslaved Africans adopted Roman Catholic rituals and sacraments.^[15] In the 19th century, elements from Spiritism—a French variant of Spiritualism—were drawn into the mix,^[16] with Santería emerging as a distinct religion in western Cuba during the late 19th century.^[17]

Although Santería is the best known of the Afro-Cuban religions,^[18] and the most popular,^[19] it is not the only one.^[8] Others include Palo, which derives from practices originating in the Congo Basin, and Abakuá, which has its origins among the secret male societies practiced among the Efik-Ibibio.^[20] Many practitioners of Palo and Abakuá also follow Santería.^[21] Another Afro-Cuban religion is Arará, which derives

from practices among the Ewe and Fon; although its origins are not Yoruba, it is sometimes considered a branch of Santería rather than a separate system.[22] Santería also has commonalities with other West African and West African-derived traditions in the Americas which collectively form the "Orisha religion",[23] "Orisha Tradition", [24] or "Orisha worship".[25][a] These include Haitian Vodou and Brazilian Candomblé, sometimes characterized as "sister religions" of Santería due to their shared origins in Yoruba traditional religion.[26]

[Santería] in Cuba was not just a continuation of Yoruba religious and cultural practices but something new, born from the encounter of the diverse Yoruba tribes with one another, with non-Yoruba Africans, and with the Europeans in a new environment and a new social order governed by [a] set of institutions different from those of Africa.

— Ethnomusicologist María Teresa Vélez[27]

Santería is a flexible and eclectic tradition,[28] with considerable variation in how it is practiced.[29] There is no strict orthodoxy,[30] no key sacred text,[31] and no central authority in control of the entire religion.[32] It has absorbed elements from many cultures that it has encountered,[33] such as that of the Chinese migrants who came to Cuba in the 19th century,[34] while in continental North America, Santería has also incorporated influences from Central American and Mexican religions as well as from New Age and modern Pagan practices.[35] As well as it being common for Cubans to idiosyncratically blend ideas from different religions,[36] many of Santería's practitioners claim multiple religious allegiances.[37] Santería's adherents often consider themselves to be Roman Catholics[38]—some priests and priestesses of Santería refuse to initiate anyone who is not a baptised Roman Catholic[39]—and others consider themselves to be Spiritists,[40] Hindus,[41] Vodouists,[42] or Jews.[43]

Terms for practitioners

Different vocabulary indicates the level of a practitioner's involvement,[44] with the various terms sometimes reflecting different political and social agendas.[45]

Practitioners of both Santería and other Afro-Cuban religions are called *creyentes* ("believers").[46] Some people external to the religion have referred to its practitioners as "santerians" although this is not used by adherents themselves.[45] A non-initiate, including those who may attend public Santería ceremonies, is an *aleyo* ("stranger");[47] these non-initiates make up the majority of people involved in the religion.[48] Initiates are known as *santero* if male,[49] and *santera* if female,[50] although these two terms have sometimes been used for anyone, initiate or not, who participates in the religion. [45] Alternative terms for an initiate are *babalocha* or *babaloricha* ("father-deity") if male and an *iyalocha* or *iyaloricha* ("mother-deity") if female.[51] Those who have a sustained engagement with the religion are also referred to as *omoricha* ("children of the oricha"), [52] *aboricha* ("one who worships the oricha"),[44] and an *oloricha* ("one who belongs to the oricha").[44]

Beliefs

Olodumare and the oricha

Santería teaches the existence of an overarching divinity, known as Olodumare, Olofi, or Olorun.[53] Practitioners believe that this divinity created the universe but takes little interest in human affairs.[54] As this creator deity is inaccessible to humanity,[55] no major offerings are dedicated to it.[56] The three facets of this divinity are understood slightly differently; Olodumare represents the divine essence of all that exists, Olorun is regarded as the creator of all beings, while Olofi dwells in all creation.[57] In taking a triplicate form, this deity displays similarities with the Christian Trinity.[57]

The oricha

One of the most prominent oricha is Eleguá, who is represented by small cement heads kept in the home.

Santería is polytheistic,[58] revolving around deities called oricha,[59] ocha,[60] or santos ("saints").[61] The term oricha can be both singular and plural, because Lucumí, the ritual language of Santería, lacks plural markers for nouns.[62] Practitioners believe that some oricha were created before humanity, while others were originally humans who became oricha through some remarkable quality.[63] Some practitioners perceive the oricha as facets of Olodumare,[64] and thus think that by venerating them they are ultimately worshipping the creator god.[65] Certain oricha are female, others male.[66] They are not regarded as wholly benevolent,[67] being capable of both harming and helping humans,[68] and displaying a mix of emotions, virtues, and vices.[69]

Origin myths and other stories about the oricha are called patakíes.[70] Each oricha is understood to "rule over" a particular aspect of the universe,[60] being identified with a different facet of the natural world or human existence.[71] They live in a realm called orún, which is contrasted with ayé, the realm of humanity.[72] Oricha each have their own caminos ("roads"),[73] or manifestations,[74] a concept akin to the Hindu concept of avatars.[75] The number of caminos an oricha has varies, with some having several hundred.[76] Practitioners believe that oricha can physically inhabit certain objects, among them stones and cowrie shells, which are deemed sacred.[77] Each oricha is also associated with specific songs, rhythms, colors, numbers, animals, and foodstuffs.[78]

Offerings before a statue of Saint Lazarus in Havana; this saint represents the oricha Babalú Ayé[79]

Among the oricha are the four "warrior deities", or guerreros: Eleguá, Ogun, Ochosi, and Osun.[80] Eleguá is viewed as the guardian of the crossroads and thresholds;[81] he is the messenger between humanity and the oricha, and most ceremonies start by requesting his permission to continue.[82] He is depicted as being black on one side and red on the other,[83] and practitioners will frequently place a cement head decorated with cowrie shells that represents Eleguá behind their front door, guarding the threshold to the street.[84] The second guerero is Ogun, viewed as the oricha of weapons and war,[85] and also of iron and blacksmiths.[86] The third, Ochosi, is associated with woods and hunting,[87] while the fourth, Osun, is a protector who warns practitioners

when they are in danger.[88]

Perhaps the most popular oricha,[89] Changó or Shango is associated with lightning and fire.[90] Another prominent oricha is Yemaja, the deity associated with maternity, fertility, and the sea.[91] Ochún is the oricha of rivers and of romantic love,[92] while Oyá is a warrior associated with wind, lightning, and death, and is viewed as the guardian of the cemetery.[93] Obatalá is the oricha of truth and justice and is deemed responsible for helping to mould humanity.[94] Babalú Ayé is the oricha associated with disease and its curing,[95] while Osain is linked to herbs and healing.[96] Orula is the oricha of divination, who in Santería's mythology was present at the creation of humanity and thus is aware of everyone's destiny.[97] Ibeyi takes the form of twins who protect children.[96] Olokún is the patron oricha of markets, while his wife Olosá is associated with lagoons.[96] Agagyú is the oricha of volcanoes and the wasteland.[96] Some oricha are deemed antagonistic to others; Changó and Ogun are for instance enemies.[98]

Although in Santería the term santo is regarded as a synonym of oricha and is not a literal reference to Christian saints,[99] the oricha are often conflated with one or more Roman Catholic saints based on similar attributes.[100] For instance, the Holy Infant of Atocha, a depiction of Christ as a child, is conflated with Eleguá, who is seen as having a childlike nature.[101] Babalú Ayé, who is associated with disease, is often identified with the Catholic Saint Lazarus, who rose from the dead,[79] while Changó is conflated with Santa Barbara because they both wear red.[102] Cuba's patron saint, Our Lady of Charity, is equated with Ochún.[103] It has been argued that Yoruba slaves initially linked their traditional deities with Christian saints as a means of concealing their continued worship of the former from the Spanish authorities,[104] or as a means of facilitating social mobility by assimilating into Roman Catholic social norms.[105]

Relationships with the oricha

Santería's focus is on cultivating a reciprocal relationship with the oricha,[60] with adherents believing that these deities can intercede in human affairs and help people if they are appeased.[63] Practitioners argue that each person is "born to" a particular oricha, whether or not they devote themselves to that deity.[106] This is a connection that, adherents believe, has been set before birth.[107] Practitioners refer to this oricha as one that "rules the head" of an individual;[60] it is their "owner of the head".[108] If the oricha is male then it is described as the individual's "father"; if the oricha is female then it is the person's "mother".[109] This oricha is deemed to influence the individual's personality, and can be recognised through examining the person's personality traits,[110] or through divination.[111]

To gain the protection of a particular oricha, practitioners are encouraged to make offerings to them, sponsor ceremonies in their honor, and live in accordance with their wishes, as determined through divination.[112] Practitioners are concerned at the prospect of offending the oricha.[113] Creyentes believe that the oricha can communicate with humans through divination, prayers, dreams, music, and dance.[114] Many practitioners also describe how they "read" messages from the oricha in everyday

interactions and events.[115] For instance, a practitioner who meets a child at a traffic intersection may interpret this as a message from Eleguá, who is often depicted as a child and who is perceived as the "guardian" of the crossroads. At that point the practitioner may turn to divination to determine the precise meaning of the encounter. The information obtained from these messages may then help practitioners make decisions about their life.[116]

Birth and the dead

A Santería shrine in Trinidad, Cuba

Santería teaches that the human head contains a person's essence, their *eledá*[117] or *orí*. [118] It maintains that before birth, the *eledá* goes before *Olodumare*, where it is given its essential character,[118] and forms a link with the *oricha* who becomes "the owner of the head".[119] The concept of the *eledá* derives from Yoruba traditional religion, where it is seen as a person's "spiritual double". In Santería, this concept idea has syncretised with Roman Catholic beliefs about guardian angels and Spiritist notions of the *protecciones* or protector spirits. There is no strict orthodoxy on this issue and thus interpretations differ.[120] Practitioners often believe that everyone has a specific destiny,[121] their *destino* (destiny) or *camino* (road),[122] although their fate is not completely predetermined.[122]

Ancestor veneration is important in Santería.[123] The religion entails propitiating the spirits of the dead, known as *egun*, [124] *espíritus*, [125] or *muertos*. [126] Practitioners believe that the dead must be treated with respect, awe, and kindness; they are consulted at all ceremonies.[127] Although the dead are not deemed as powerful as the *oricha*, they are still thought capable of assisting the living,[127] with whom they can communicate through dreams, intuition, and spirit possession.[122] Santería teaches that a person can learn to both see and communicate with the dead.[127] Practitioners will often provide offerings, typically seven glasses of water, to the *egun* to placate and please them.[127] Especially propitiated are those *egun* regarded as ancestors; [60] these ancestors can include both hereditary forebears or past members of one's congregation,[128] with practitioners believing that a *creyente* becomes an ancestor when they die.[129]

Adherents believe that everyone has a *cuadro espiritual* ("spiritual portrait" or "spiritual picture") of *egun* who protect them.[130] Individuals can have as many as 25 protectores, or protective spirits.[107] The religion maintains that all people have multiple *egun* accompanying them at all times, and that these can be benevolent, malevolent, or a mix of both.[127] Practitioners also believe that the number and identities of these spirits can be determined through divination.[127] It draws a distinction between evolved spirits, who can help those they are attached to, and unevolved spirits, who lack the wisdom and skill to be useful and instead cause havoc.[131] Santería teaches that through offerings and prayers, individuals can help some of their unevolved spirits to become evolved.[131] Santería also divides the spirits into categories that each exhibit different traits, reflecting stereotypes about different social groups,[122] with such spirits

often portrayed as African, Haitian, Gypsy, Arab, or Plains Indian.[132] The gitano (gypsy) spirits for instance are believed capable of foreseeing impending troubles and diagnosing illnesses while the congo spirits of Africa are perceived as strong-willed, powerful, and adept at guiding people through hostile circumstances.[122]

Aché

Aché is a major cosmological concept in Yoruba traditional religion and has been transferred to Santería.[133] Aché is regarded as the organizing power of the cosmos; [134] the Hispanic studies scholars Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert referred to it as "a spiritual-mystical energy or power found in varying degrees and in many forms throughout the universe".[63] The medical anthropologist Johan Wedel described it as "life force"[135] or "divine force",[136] while the folklorist Michael Atwood Mason called aché the "ritual generative power".[65] The ethnomusicologist Katherine Hagedorn described aché as "the realized and inherent divine potential in all aspects of life, even in apparently inert objects." [133] She added that "Aché is neither good nor bad; rather, aché is motion".[129]

While deeming Olodumare the ultimate embodiment of aché,[137] practitioners believe that aché permeates all life,[63] and is present in both the visible and invisible world. [138] It is nevertheless deemed to sometimes congregate more densely, for instance in the forces of nature, specific locales, and in certain human individuals;[138] initiates are believed to attract more of it than other humans.[133] Santería holds that aché can emanate from the human body via speech, song, dance, and drumming,[139] and can be transmitted through such acts as singing praise songs for the oricha or sacrificing an animal.[140] Among practitioners, aché is sometimes described as conveying notions of luck, health, and prosperity,[136] and has the power to fortify a person's health.[141]

Morality, ethics, and gender roles

Two practitioners of Santería taking part in a Cajon de Muertos ceremony in 2011
Santería has standards for behavior expected of practitioners,[142] encouraging behaviors influenced by the mythological stories about the oricha.[143] The religion presents strict rules regarding how to interact with other people and with the supernatural,[144] for instance placing emphasis on respect for elders and superiors. [145] A general attitude in Santería is that if an individual maintains good character, the oricha will aid them.[146] Practitioners generally take socially conservative stances, having high regard for traditional family structures, marriage, fidelity, and child-rearing; [147] adherents in the United States often adopt more progressive stances on issues surrounding gender and sexuality than their counterparts in Cuba.[148]

The religion is non-dualistic and does not view the universe as being divided between good and evil; rather, all things are perceived as being complementary and relative.[149] Several academics have described Santería as having a "here-and-now" ethos distinct from that of Christianity,[150] and the social scientist Mercedes C. Sandoval suggested that many Cubans chose Santería over Roman Catholicism or Spiritism because it

emphasizes techniques for dealing with pragmatic problems in life.[151] In the U.S., some African American adherents have contrasted what they regard as the African-derived ethos of Santería with the non-African origins of Christianity,[152] thus adopting it as a religion readily combined with black nationalism.[153]

The scholar of religion Mary Ann Clark labelled Santería a "female oriented and female normative" religion,[154] arguing that all of its practitioners are expected to take on "female gender roles" during its rituals.[155] Women can hold the highest leadership positions,[156] although restrictions are placed on them while menstruating.[157] Similar restrictions are also placed on homosexual males, traditionally prohibiting them from taking part in certain forms of divination and ritual drumming.[158] Many gay men and lesbians are nevertheless santeros or santeras,[159] with Yemaja being seen as the patron of gay and bisexual men.[160] A stereotype exists that all male Santería priests are homosexual,[161] and members of other Afro-Cuban traditions with a more masculinist orientation, such as Palo, have often denigrated it for being dominated by women and men they consider to be "womanly".[161]

Practices

Santería is a practice-oriented religion; ritual correctness is considered more important than belief.[162] It has an elaborate system of ritual,[163] with its rites termed *ceremonias* (ceremonies).[164] Most of its activities revolve around the *oricha*,[138] focusing on solving the problems of everyday life.[146] Practitioners usually use the term *trabajo* (work) in reference to ritual activity;[165] thus "working ocha" describes its rites.[166]

Santería is an initiatory religion,[167] one which is organized around a structured hierarchy.[168] An ethos of secrecy pervades many of its practices,[169] with initiates often refusing to discuss certain topics with non-initiates.[170] For this reason, Mason described Santería as a secret society.[171] For ritual purposes, the Lucumí language is often used.[172] Sometimes referred to as *la lengua de los orichas* ("the language of the oricha"),[173] it is regarded as a divine language through which practitioners can contact the deities.[174] Although some practitioners are uncomfortable using it,[175] most initiates know tens or hundreds of Lucumí words and phrases.[173] Most Cubans do not understand the Lucumí language, barring a few words that have filtered into Cuban Spanish.[176] Lucumí derives from the Yoruba language, although it has become "increasingly fragmented and unintelligible" since the 19th century.[177] As Yoruba transitioned into Lucumí, the Yoruba pronunciations of many words were forgotten,[175] and in the early 21st century some practitioners have studied the Yoruba language to better understand the original meaning of Lucumí words.[178]

Houses of worship

Baba Raúl Cañizares, a Cuban priest of both Santería and Palo photographed with his ritual paraphernalia

Rituals take place in the *ilé* ("house"),[179] sometimes called the *ilé-oricha* ("house of

the oricha"),[180] casa templo ("house of worship"),[181] casa de santos ("house of saints"),[182] or casa de religión ("house of religion").[183] The ethnomusicologist María Teresa Vélez called this the "house-temple", [180] with the ilé usually being the personal home of a santero or santera.[166] It will typically have an inner room, the igbodu ("sacred grove of the festival"), where the most important rituals take place.[184] There will also be an eyá aránla or sala, often a living room, where semi-private rites can be conducted.[184] Another space, the iban balo, or patio, will be used for public occasions, as well as for the cultivation of plants and the housing of animals due to be sacrificed.[184] The ilé will typically include a place to store ritual paraphernalia, kitchen facilities, and space for visitors to sleep.[166]

The ilé refers not only to the building where ceremonies take place, but also the community of practitioners who meet there.[166] In this sense, many ilés trace a lineage back to the 19th century, with some santeros and santeras capable of listing the practitioners who have been initiated into it.[166] In some ceremonies, the names of these individuals, who are regarded as the ancestors of the house, are recited in chronological order.[185] Although members of different houses often interact, each ilé is largely autonomous, allowing for variation in their practices.[186] In Cuba, it is common for Santería practitioners to meet with each other regularly,[187] and to regard each other as being akin to a family:[188] the familia de santo.[189] Conversely, in an area like Veracruz in Mexico, many practitioners attend group rituals and then leave, sometimes never seeing their co-practitioners again.[187]

Most ilés are established by a santero or santera who has attracted a following.[190] An apprentice is known as their ahijado (godson) or ahijada (goddaughter).[191] They refer to their santero/santera as padrino (godfather) or madrina (godmother).[192] The relationship between santeros/santeras and their "godchildren" is central to the religion's social organization,[190] and practitioners believe that the more "godchildren" a santera or santero has, the greater their aché.[136] The "godchildren" are expected to contribute both their labor and finances to events held at the ilé and in return the santero/santera provides assistance for their needs.[190] Within the religion, offending one's godparent is regarded as also offending the oricha that "rules the head".[115] Practitioners express respect both to their godparent and the oricha via a ritual prostration, the moforibale, in which they bow their head to the floor.[193] The precise form of the moforibale differs depending on whether the individual's personal oricha is male or female.[194]

Shrines

A sopera containing otanes representing the oricha Yemaya, who is associated with the sea; Yemaya altars often feature seashells and nautical paraphernalia.[195] Altars or shrines to the oricha are typically found both within the igbodu[196] and in practitioners' homes.[197] Central to these altars are sacred objects, termed fundamentos ("fundamentals"),[198] which are contained within porcelain vessels, often tureens, called sopera.[199] The most important of the fundamentos are stones termed otanes (sing. otán),[199] which are regarded as the literal and symbolic representation

of the oricha,[200] and thus living entities.[201] They are deemed to be sources of aché, [202] with older otanes having more aché than younger ones.[203]

Practitioners will collect stones from the landscape and then use divination to determine which ones contain an oricha and, if so, which oricha it is.[204] Specific otanes sometimes display traits linking them to particular oricha; for example ocean stones are linked with Yemaya, river pebbles with Ochún, and meteorite fragments with Changó. [57] Each oricha is deemed to prefer a particular color and number of otanes in sopera devoted to them; Changó has six or ten black stones, Obatala has eight white stones, while Ochún favors five yellow stones.[205] New otanes undergo a bautismo ("baptism") rite,[202] entailing them being washed in osain, a mixture of herbs and water, and then "fed" with animal blood.[203] When an initiate receives their stones, they take an oath to protect them and feed them at least annually.[202]

A bóveda, or white table, set out for the spirits of the dead, at a ilé in Trinidad, Cuba Other material placed inside the sopera includes cowrie shells; usually 18 are added although the precise number differs depending on which oricha the sopera is devoted to. [203] The sopera will often be covered by a cloth known as a pañuelo that is colored in accordance with the oricha in question.[206] Often laid over the sopera are necklaces known as collares, again representing a particular oricha.[207] On the altar, the sopera will be arranged in a descending hierarchy depending on which oricha each is dedicated to, with that of Obatala at the top.[208]

Many altars contain few or no anthropomorphic depictions of the oricha,[209] although will often include objects associated with them;[197] a wooden axe for Changó or a fan for Ochún, for instance.[206] Creating these altars is deemed expensive and time-consuming.[206] Material may be selected based on the tastes of the adherent; anthropologists have observed practitioners who have included Taoist figurines[210] or statues of wizards,[211] on their altars. Food and flowers are often placed on the altar as offerings.[212] Although rarely included on their altars, practitioners will often have statues of Roman Catholic saints elsewhere in their homes.[211]

In addition to their altar to the oricha, many practitioners have altars set aside for the spirits of the dead.[213] These typically consist of a white-covered table known as a bóveda,[214] something derived from the White Table of Spiritism.[215] Bóveda often feature photographs of deceased relatives, to whom offerings are given;[216] popular offerings for the spirits of the dead include seven glasses of water,[127] a cafecito coffee,[217] and the aguardiente liquor.[218] Alternatively, many practitioners of Santería—like those who follow Palo—will have a rinconcito ("little corner"), a small area in which they collect together assorted objects, often those typically found in a household, as a material manifestation of the dead. Offerings to the dead may be placed here.[219] Many practitioners will also enshrine their family ancestors under the bathroom sink. This location is chosen so that the ancestors can travel between the realms of the living and the dead via the water in the pipes.[215]

Offerings and animal sacrifice

A chicken being sacrificed at a 2017 Santería ritual in Havana

Offerings are called *ebbó*[220] (or *ebó*),[221] and are given to the *oricha*, ancestral spirits, to a person's own *ori*, and sometimes to the earth.[222] These offerings can consist of fruit and other foodstuffs, liquor, flowers, candles, money, or slaughtered animals.[223] Divination is often used to determine the exact nature of the offering;[224] initiates are supposed to provide offerings on a regular basis, and at least once a year.[225] Given to strengthen the supernatural forces, to thank them, or as a supplication, [226] they help form a reciprocal relationship with these entities in the hope of receiving something in return.[227] If this fails to materialise, practitioners may resort to several explanations: that the details of the ritual were incorrect, that the priest or priestess carrying out the rite lacked sufficient *aché*, or that the wrong *ebbó* was provided for the situation.[228]

Animal sacrifice is called *matanza*,[229] or sometimes *ebó eyé*,[230] with the person carrying it out termed the *matador*. [231] This is usually a man,[232] with menstruating women prohibited from involvement.[136] Birds—including guinea fowl, chickens, and doves—are commonly sacrificed, usually by having their throats slit or their heads twisted and ripped off.[233] For rituals of greater importance, sacrifices are often of four-legged animals.[76] Some practitioners describe the killing of animals as an acceptable substitute to human sacrifice,[234] and in Cuba there have been persistent rumours of children being sacrificed in Santería rites.[235] The *oricha* and *egun* are believed to "eat" the blood of the victim;[236] the latter's lifeforce is deemed to transfer to the *oricha*, thus strengthening its *aché*. [237] An animal that struggles to avoid being killed is sometimes understood as having particular strength which will then pass to the *oricha*. [237]

Once killed, the animals' severed heads may be placed on top of the *sopera* belonging to the *oricha* to which the sacrifice has been directed.[238] After the carcass has been butchered, some of the organs—known as *acheses*—may be cooked and offered to the *oricha*;^[239] other parts will be eaten by practitioners.[240] Some of the blood may be collected and added to *omiero*, an infusion of herbs and water.[231] Believed to contain much *aché*,^[241] this liquid is used for removing malevolent influences and in ceremonies for baptising ritual tools.[231] Santería's animal sacrifice has been a cause of concern for many non-practitioners.[242] It has sometimes brought adherents into confrontation with the law,[243] as with the 1993 case of *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, in which the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that animal cruelty laws targeted specifically at Santería were unconstitutional.[244]

Initiation

Main article: Initiation in Santería

An initiate with ceremonial material in Havana; initiates wear white clothing during the

initiation process[245]

Initiation is known as kariocha,[246] "making ocha",[247] or "making santo".[248] A charge is levied for initiation;[249] this varies depending on the client, but is often equivalent to a year's wage.[250] Each initiation varies in its details, which are often concealed from non-initiates.[251] The initiate is known as an iyabó[252] or iyawó,[253] a term meaning both "slave of the oricha" and "bride of the oricha".[254] As well as the santero or santera overseeing the initiation ceremony, the event may be attended by an oyubona or oyugbona ("one who witnesses"), who acts as a secondary godparent to the new initiate.[255]

The initiation process takes seven days,[256] plus two days of preparatory rituals.[257] During this preparation, a misa espiritual ("spiritual mass") will typically take place to gain the blessings of the ancestral egun, and an ebó de entrada ("opening sacrifice") will be made to the oricha or the egun.[258] Next comes the ceremonia del río ("ceremony of the initiate"), in which offerings are given to Ochún,[259] and the rompimiento ("breaking"), in which the oyubona takes the initiate to purify themselves in a river.[260] The rest of the initiation takes place in the igbodu,[261] where the initiate sleeps upon a mat on the floor for the seven days.[262] No one uninvolved in the initiation is permitted entry.[263] The initiate is given their own otanes,[264] as well as objects representing the warrior oricha.[265] They are also given beaded necklaces, known as collares[266] or elekes[267] (ilekes).[268] Each necklace is a different color associated with a specific deity.[269] During the prendición ("pinning") ritual, a heavy necklace known as the collar de mazo is placed on the initiate.[270] During the lavatorio ("washing"),[271] the initiate's head is bathed in omiero,[272] designed to rid them of any malevolent spirits attached to them.[273] Often, their hair will be shaved off.[273]

A woman practitioner in Old Havana, Cuba

On the día del itá ("day of history"),[274] usually the third day, the initiate will undergo the itá, a session with a diviner.[275] The diviner will reveal the initiate's Lucumí ritual name,[276] a praise name of the oricha that rules their head.[264] This name often incorporates elements indicating the initiate's tutelary oricha; devotees of Yemajá for instance usually include omí ("water"), while those of Changó often have obá ("king").[277] Next comes the asiento ("seating"),[48] or coronación ("coronation"),[278] which marks the point when the aché of the tutelary oricha is believed to literally enter the initiate's cranium.[107] The otanes of several oricha are placed to the initiate's head, culminating in those of their tutelary oricha.[279] An animal sacrifice usually follows, involving at least five four-legged animals and 25 birds.[280] The following day is el Día del Medio ("the middle day"), when guests—including the initiate's family and friends—pay homage to them.[281] It includes drumming and a feast.[281] On the seventh day of the initiation, the new initiate leaves the ilé and visits the marketplace, where they make offerings to Eleguá and steal something small, also as an offering to Eleguá.[282]

The initiate can finally take their otanes home.[283] They may then undergo a year-long period, the iyaworaje ("journey of the iyawo"), during which they must observe certain

restrictions, the nature of which depends on their tutelary oricha.[284] This may for instance include abstaining from sexual intercourse, wearing only white, or not cutting their hair.[285] The iyaworaje ends with the ebó del año ceremony.[286] Once this is done, they may lead rituals and help initiate others.[287] Thenceforth, they will celebrate the annual anniversary of their initiation, their cumpleaños de santo ("birthday in the saint").[288] Although a largely orally-transmitted tradition,[289] santeros and santeras often emphasise teaching in a non-verbal manner, encouraging their initiates to learn through taking part in the ritual activities.[290] Since at least the 20th century, some initiates have kept libretas, notebooks in which they have written down material relevant to the practice of Santería.[291] These may be shared with their own initiates or kept private.[292]

Toque de santo

Several types of batá drum, which are used in the toque de santo ritual. Santería's main public ritual is a drumming ceremony called the toque de santo,[293] or tambor.[294] Lasting for up to several hours,[295] this is usually seen as an offering to the oricha, performed to gain their favor.[114] The goal of the rhythms and songs is to summon the oricha to earth,[296] at which point they can possess one of the participants.[297] It is believed that the collective energy built up by the group is necessary in achieving this.[298] In turn, the oricha are believed capable of soothing the grieving, healing the sick, blessing the deserving, and rebuking those who have behaved badly.[114]

The toque de santo uses double-headed drums called batá;[299] these are deemed sacred,[300] and are sometimes regarded as the central symbol of Santería.[301] There are multiple types of batá: the iyá is the largest, the itótele is smaller, and the okónkolo is the smallest.[302] For ceremonial purposes, these drums must be wooden; adding metal elements could offend Changó, who is associated with wooden artefacts, because of their links with his enemy, Ogun.[303] They may however have brass bells associated with Ochún, known as chaworo, affixed to their rim.[304] Each ceremonial drum has to be "born" from an existing example, the latter constituting its "godfather," and in this way they form lineages.[305] Before being used in ceremonies, these drums are baptized, after which they are referred to as a tambor de fundamento.[306] This baptism entails washing the drums in omiero, making sacrifices to Osain, and affixing an afoubo, a small leather bag containing items including a parrot feather and glass beads, to the interior of the drum.[307]

Duration: 2 minutes and 11 seconds.2:11

A dance dedicated to the oricha Ochún recorded in Santiago de Cuba in 2013. Practitioners believe that the consecrated batá contain a substance called añá,[308] itself an avatar of Ochún,[304] and a manifestation of aché.[309] Many drummers avoid mentioning the añá in public and may not refer to it by name.[304] Drums which have not been baptised are not viewed as containing añá, and are called tambores judíos ("Jewish drums").[310] Particular rhythms played on the drums may be associated with

a specific oricha,[311] a group of oricha, or all of the oricha.[312] Those playing the batá are called batáleros,[313] and have their own hierarchy separate from that of the priesthood.[314] Santería drumming is male dominated;[315] women are discouraged or banned from playing the batá during ceremonies,[316] although by the 1990s some women practitioners in the U.S. had taken on the role.[317] Practitioners explain the taboo with the view that menstrual blood can weaken the drum's añá,[318] or that the drum's desire for blood would drain the woman, causing her harm,[319] or in some cases infertility.[320]

Praise songs are sung for the oricha,[321] with specific songs associated with particular deities.[322] These may be sung a cappella or with instrumental accompaniment.[323] The lead singer at such ceremonies is known as an akpwón.[324] During the opening verse of the song, the akpwón may break into a personal prayer.[325] The akpwón can switch from song to song quickly, with the drummers having to adapt their rhythm accordingly.[133] A chorus of singers will respond to the akpwón, often while swaying back and forth.[326] These choral responses may split into a two or three-part harmony.[325] Dancing also takes place, with each oricha associated with a particular dance style.[322] The dances at the toque de santo are believed to generate aché, strengthening the link between the realms of the oricha and humanity.[298] Dancing either alone or first in front of the drums at the toque de santo is considered a privilege and is usually reserved for the most experienced initiate present.[327] There are specific rules of engagement that are laid out for taking part in the toque de santo;[114] dancing poorly at the ritual is considered an insult to the oricha.[298]

Possession

Possession is important in Santería,[328] and the purpose of the toque de santo is to call down an oricha to possess one of the participants.[297] The possessed individual is referred to as the "horse", with the oricha having "mounted" them.[329] According to practitioners, becoming possessed by an oricha requires an individual giving up their consciousness to the deity,[330] and accordingly they often claim no memory of the events that occurred during the possession.[331] Some have stated that reaching the mental state whereby an individual can become possessed takes much practice.[330] The onset of the trance is marked by body spasms, termed arullarse.[332]

Once an individual is possessed, they may be taken into an adjacent room where they are dressed in the ritual clothing pertaining to the possessing oricha, after which they are returned to the main room.[333] As well as speaking in the Lucumí language,[334] those possessed may then display gestures associated with a particular oricha;[335] for instance, those believing themselves possessed by Ochún may wipe their skirt over other people, representing the waves of the ocean, while those regarding themselves as being possessed by Eleguá may steal from assembled participants.[336] The possessed individual will then provide healing or dispense advice;[331] sometimes a possessed person will reprimand others present, for instance for failing to carry out their ritual obligations, or issue them a warning.[152] Some practitioners have also reported becoming possessed by an oricha in non-ritual contexts, such as while sleeping or

walking through the streets,[334] or during drumming performances carried out for non-religious purposes.[337]

Healing and amuletic practices

A selection of paraphernalia associated with Santería for sale in Havana
Healing is important in Santería,[338] and health problems are the most common reason why people approach a santero or santera for help.[339] When operating as healers, practitioners are sometimes termed curanderos,[340] or osainistas.[341] Particular focuses of Santería healing include skin complaints, gastrointestinal and respiratory problems, sexually transmitted infections, and issues of female reproduction; some practitioners provide concoctions to induce abortion.[342] Santería healers will typically use divination to determine the cause of an ailment before prescribing treatment.[343]

Santería teaches that supernatural factors cause or exacerbate ailments.[344] It claims that oricha may make someone sick, either as punishment or to encourage them to make a change in their life, often to become an initiate. The oricha must then be propitiated to stop, sometimes with the sick individual receiving initiation.[345] Santería also holds that a spirit of the dead may attach itself to an individual and thus harm them.[346] Adherents also often believe that humans can harm one another through supernatural means, either involuntarily, by giving them the mal de ojo (evil eye),[347] or deliberately, through brujería (witchcraft).[348] The latter are often perceived as acting out of envy,[349] utilising cursing techniques from Palo,[350] for which they have employed material, such as hair or nail clippings, taken from their victim.[351]

Herbalism is a major component of Santería healing practices,[352] with healing plants, termed egwe, having an important role in the religion.[353] Practitioners believe that each species of plant has its own aché which holds healing power; medicinal plants are deemed more powerful if harvested from the wild rather than being cultivated, for the latter can lack aché.[141] Adherents often believe that different types of plant have different temperaments and personalities; some are shy or easily frightened and thus need to be approached with the appropriate etiquette.[141]

An outdoor Cuban altar photographed in 2015

To heal a patient, the santero/santera may also prescribe omiero,[352] give them a cleansing bath,[354] or provide them with a collares necklace.[355] They may perform a ritual to transfer the sickness to an animal,[351] sacrifice an animal to a specific oricha to request healing,[356] or encourage an oricha to possess the sick individual and thus heal them.[357] Different oricha are linked to the healing of specific ailments; Ochún is for instance usually requested when dealing with genital problems.[151] People who are sick may undergo the rogación de la cabeza ("blessing of the head"), in which coconut water and cotton are applied to the head to feed the orí.[358] Many practitioners will also encourage their clients to seek mainstream medical assistance, either from doctors or

psychotherapists, with Santería healing seen as complementary to medical science.
[359]

Santería features protective talismans known as resguardos.[360] These are created using herbs and blood and produced while in contact with the otanes.[231] Resguardos are often given to small children, who are deemed particularly vulnerable to sorcery.
[361] Charms and amulets are also used as a general prophylaxis against illness; one example are ears of corn that are wrapped in purple ribbon and placed behind a doorway.[362] Other rituals are designed to protect against sorcery, as for instance with the scattering of petals of the gálan de día in the house or the placement of okra by the door.[362] In Cuba, protective rituals from Santería have often been invoked in hospitals to prevent the cambio de vida ("life switch"), a practice by which the ailments of a sick person are believed to be transferred to another individual, often without the latter's knowledge.[363]

Divination

Divination is a central aspect of Santería,[364] taking place before all major rites and being utilized by adherents at critical moments of their life.[215] Three main divinatory techniques are employed: obi, dilogún, and Ifá.[365] Highly skilled diviners are known as an oríate[366] or italero/italera (male and female),[367] and sometimes work in this role fulltime.[368]

A Cuban santero in Havana engaging in a form of divination

Clients approach these diviners for a divinatory consulta (consultation),[369] usually to ask for advice about their health, family problems, or legal issues,[370] and in doing so will pay the diviner a fee, the derecho.[371] Attending a divination ritual in this way is commonly the first time that an individual encounters Santería so directly.[372] During the session, offerings will be given to an overseeing oricha; the diviner will then cast small objects onto a board or table and interpret the way in which they fall.[373] The diviner asks the client questions and seeks to answer them by making multiple throws.
[374] The diviner will ultimately determine which oricha will assist the client in dealing with their problems and outline what sacrifices will be appropriate to secure the aid of said oricha.[375]

Obi, also known as biagué, involves the casting of four pieces of a dried coconut shell, with the manner in which they fall being used to answer a question.[376] Any practitioner can utilise this technique,[215] which is also used in Palo.[376] Dilogún entails the casting of cowrie shells,[377] and is considered more complex in that it requires a knowledge of the patakie stories.[376] Dilogún typically involves a set of 21 cowrie shells, filed flat on their round side; these are fed with both omiero and blood.
[378] Like obi, dilogún is generally seen as being open to all practitioners of Santería,
[215] although some groups reserve it for postmenopausal women.[158]

Ifá is the most complex and prestigious divinatory system used in the religion.[215] It

typically involves the casting of consecrated palm nuts to answer a question, with the nuts offering 256 possible configurations.[379] Although Ifá also has a separate existence from Santería,[380] the two are closely linked, sharing the same mythology and conception of the universe;[18] the oricha of Ifá, Orula or Ọrúnmila, has a prominent place within Santería.[380] High priests of Ifá are known as babalawos and although their presence is not essential to Santería ceremonies, they often attend in their capacity as diviners.[381] Many santeros are also babalawos,[382] although it is not uncommon for babalawos to perceive themselves as being superior to most santeros.[383] Unlike the more open policy for Santería initiates, only heterosexual men are traditionally allowed to become babalawos,[384] although some babalawos are gay men,[158] and since the 21st century a small number of women have also been initiated.[385]

Funerals and mediumship

A selection of offerings that have been placed at the base of a tree in Cuba as part of a Santería rite

Funeral rites, called itutu, are designed to appease the soul of the deceased.[386] As part of this, a funeral mass is held in a Roman Catholic church nine days after the individual has died to ensure that their soul successfully travels to the realm of the spirits.[387] A year of additional rites for the dead individual follow, a period ended with the levantamiento de platos, the breaking of a dish, to symbolise the deceased's final departure from the realm of the living.[386]

As well as having been influenced by Spiritism,[388] Santería is often intertwined with Espiritismo, a Puerto Rican tradition focused on contacting the dead;[389] this is particularly the case in areas such as New York and New Jersey.[390] Sometimes the word "Santerismo" is used to refer to a blend between the two traditions.[391] Various santeros or santeras are believed capable of communicating with spirits;[392] seances conducted for this purpose are called misas espirituales ("spiritual masses") and are led by mortevras ("deaders") who are usually women.[393] During these rituals, the medium may be possessed by a spirit of the dead, who then engages in healing practices or offers advice and warnings to those assembled.[394] Adopted from Espiritismo, they are often included in initiation and funerary rites.[120] An additional ritual found in Santería is the tambor para egún, a drum ceremony for the spirits of the dead.[395]

Some practitioners whose approach to Santería is influenced by Espiritismo also create cloth dolls for deceased family members and spirit guides.[396] The spirit is believed to enter and inhabit the doll,[397] with some practitioners stating that they can see the inhabiting spirit.[398] Sometimes the doll's clothing is changed to please the spirit,[397] while offerings, such as glasses of water or fruit, are placed before them.[399] These spirit dolls may also be passed down through the generations within a family.[400]

History

Main article: History of Santería

Background

Painting of a slave auction in Cuba. Most elements of Santería came from African religious ideas preserved by slaves.

After the Spanish Empire conquered Cuba, the island's Arawak and Ciboney populations dramatically declined.[401] To provide a new labor source for the sugar, tobacco, and coffee plantations they had established on Cuba, the Spanish then turned to buying slaves sold at West African ports.[402] Slavery was widespread in West Africa; most slaves were prisoners of war captured in conflicts with neighbouring groups, although some were convicted criminals.[403] The first enslaved Africans arrived in Cuba in 1511,[404] although the largest numbers came in the 19th century.[405] Cuba continued to receive new slaves until at least 1860,[404] with full emancipation occurring in 1886.[406] In total, between 702,000 and 1 million enslaved Africans were brought to Cuba.[407] Most came from a stretch of Western Africa between the modern nation-states of Guinea and Angola.[408] The great plurality were Yoruba, from the area encompassed by modern Nigeria and Benin;[409] the Yoruba had a shared language and culture but were divided among different states.[410] They largely adhered to Yoruba traditional religion,[411] which incorporated many local orisha cults although with certain orisha worshipped widely due to the extent of the Yoruba-led Oyo Empire.[412]

In Cuba, slaves were divided into groups termed *naciones* (nations), often based on their port of embarkation rather than their own ethno-cultural background;[413] those who were Yoruba speakers, as well as Arara and Ibo people, were identified as the "Lucumí nation".[414] Enslaved West Africans brought their traditional religions with them to Cuba;[65] some were from the priestly class and possessed knowledge of traditions such as Ifá.[411] While hundreds of orisha were worshipped across West Africa, fewer than twenty became prominent in Santería, perhaps because many kin-based orisha cults were lost when traditional kinship networks were destroyed through enslavement.[415] Orisha associated with agriculture were abandoned, probably because slaves had little reason to protect the harvests of slave-owners.[416] Many myths associated with the oricha were transformed, creating kinship relationships between different oricha which were not present in West African mythologies.[143] As Santería formed, separate West African orisha cults were reconstituted into a single religious system,[417] one which had a newly standardized pantheon of oricha.[418]

In Spanish Cuba, Roman Catholicism was the only religion that could be practiced legally.[419] Cuba's Roman Catholic Church made efforts to convert the enslaved Africans, but the instruction in Roman Catholicism provided to the latter was typically perfunctory and sporadic.[413] In Cuba, traditional African deities perhaps continued to be venerated within clubs and fraternal organizations made up of African migrants and their descendants.[420] The most important of these were the *cabildos de nación*, associations that the establishment regarded as a means of controlling the Afro-Cuban population.[421] These operated as mutual aid societies and organized communal feasts, dances, and carnivals.[422] The Catholic Church saw these groups as a method for gradual evangelisation, through which they tolerated the practice of some African customs while stamping out those they most fiercely objected to.[423] It is probable that

in these groups, priests of different West African orisha interacted and began to develop a new system.[424] In the late 18th and early 19th century new laws restricted the cabildos' activities,[425] although their membership expanded in the 19th century.[426] The final decades of the 19th century also saw a growing interest in Spiritism, a religion based on the ideas of the French writer Allan Kardec, which in Cuba proved particularly popular among the white peasantry, the Creole class, and the small urban middle class.[427] Ideas from Spiritism increasingly filtered into and influenced Santería.[428]

Formation and early history

A painting from 1850 showing Afro-Cubans celebrating Carnival in a manner incorporating preserved African cultural practices.

The earliest casas teaching Santería emerged in urban parts of western Cuba during the late 19th century.[17] As a trained priesthood emerged, they ensured a level of standardisation among new initiates.[424] Although it drew on older West African cults, Santería was, as described by Clark, "a new religious system".[429] Urban-to-rural migration then spread Santería elsewhere in Cuba,[430] and in the 1930s it probably arrived in Cuba's second largest city, Santiago de Cuba, which lies at the eastern end of the island.[431]

Following the Cuban War of Independence, the island became an independent republic in 1898. In the republic, Afro-Cubans remained largely excluded from economic and political power,[432] and negative stereotypes about them remained pervasive throughout the Euro-Cuban population.[433] Afro-Cuban religious practices were often referred to as brujería (witchcraft) and thought to be connected to criminality.[434] Although the republic's new constitution enshrined freedom of religion and Santería was never legislated against, throughout the first half of the 20th century various campaigns were launched against it.[435] These were often encouraged by the press, who promoted allegations that white children were being abducted and murdered in Santería rituals;[436] this reached a fever pitch in 1904 after two white children were murdered in Havana in cases that investigators speculated were linked to brujería.[437]

One of the first intellectuals to examine Santería was the lawyer and ethnographer Fernando Ortiz, who discussed it in his 1906 book *Los negros brujos* (The Black Witchdoctors).[438] He saw it as a barrier to the social integration of Afro-Cubans into broader Cuban society and recommended its suppression.[439] In the 1920s, there were efforts to incorporate elements of Afro-Cuban culture into a wider understanding of Cuban culture, such as through the *Afrocubanismo* literary and artistic movement. These often drew upon Afro-Cuban music, dance, and mythology, but typically rejected Santería rituals themselves.[440] In 1942, Rómulo Lachatañeré's *Manuel de santería* was published, representing the first scholarly attempt to understand Santería as a religion;[441] in contrast to Ortiz, he maintained that the tradition should be seen as a religious system as opposed to a form of witchcraft.[442] Lachatañeré was instrumental in promoting the term Santería in reference to the phenomenon, deeming it a more neutral description than the pejorative-laden terms such as brujería then in common

use.[443]

After the Cuban Revolution

A statue of Santa Barbara in a house in Mantilla, Havana; practitioners sometimes have statues of Roman Catholic saints in their homes.[211]

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 resulted in the island becoming a Marxist-Leninist state governed by Fidel Castro's Communist Party of Cuba.[444] Committed to state atheism, Castro's government took a negative view of Santería.[445] Practitioners experienced police harassment,[446] were denied membership of the Communist Party,[447] and faced limited employment opportunities.[448] They required police permission to perform rituals, which was sometimes denied.[449] The state nevertheless promoted art forms associated with Santería in the hope of using them to promote a unified Cuban identity.[450] While espousing anti-racism, Castro's government viewed the promotion of a separate Afro-Cuban identity as counter-revolutionary.[451]

Following the Soviet Union's collapse in the 1990s, Castro's government declared that Cuba was entering a "Special Period" in which new economic measures would be necessary. As part of this, it selectively supported Afro-Cuban and Santería traditions, partly out of a desire to boost tourism;[452] this Santería-focused tourism was called *santurismo*. [453] Priests of Santería, Palo, and Ifá all took part in government-sponsored tours for foreigners desiring initiation into such traditions, while Afro-Cuban floor shows became common in Cuban hotels.[446] In 1991, the Communist Party approved the admission of religious members, and in 1992 the constitution was amended to declare Cuba a secular rather than an atheist state.[454] This liberalisation allowed Santería to leave behind its marginalisation,[455] and during the 1990s it began to be practiced more openly.[456]

A shop in Havana selling paraphernalia associated with Santería

The second half of the 20th century saw a growing awareness of Santería's links with other orisha-worshipping religions in West Africa and the Americas.[457] These transnational links were reinforced when the Ooni of Ife Olubuse II, a prominent Yoruba political and religious leader, visited Cuba in 1987.[458] Cuba's government permitted the formation of the Yoruba Cultural Association, a non-governmental organization, in the early 1990s,[459] while various practitioners of Santería visited Nigeria to study traditional Yoruba religion.[460] A *yorubización* (Yorubization) process emerged, with attempts made to remove Roman Catholic elements from Santería;[461] this process was criticised by those who saw Santería's syncretism as a positive trait.[462]

The Cuban Revolution fuelled Cuban emigration, especially to the United States, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela.[463] With an increased Cuban presence in the U.S., Santería grew in many U.S. cities, being embraced by Latino Americans as well as European Americans and African Americans.[171] Some African Americans regarded it as an authentically African religion, especially when purged of Roman Catholic

elements,[464] sometimes perceiving it as a religious wing of the Black Power movement.[153] A prominent exponent of this approach was the black nationalist activist Walter King. After being initiated in Cuba, he established a temple in Harlem before relocating with his followers in 1970 to a community in Sheldon, South Carolina, that they called the Yoruba Village of Oyotunji. Having a strained relationship with many other santeros and santeras, who accused him of racism, King gradually came to call his tradition "Orisha-Voodoo" rather than Santería.[465] In the U.S., Santería, along with Haitian Vodou, also proved an influence on the revival of Louisiana Voodoo in the late 20th century.[466] One of the most prominent figures in this revival, Ava Kay Jones, had previously been involved in King's Orisha-Voodoo.[466]

Demographics

Further information: Religion in Cuba

Afro-Cuban drummers in Havana performing a toque based on those found in Santería. The scholars of religion Anibal Argüelles Mederos and Ileana Hodge Limonta estimated that in the early 21st century around 8% of Cubans were initiates of Santería, which would amount to between 800,000 and 900,000 people.[467] There are a greater number of people who are not initiates but turn to santeros and santeras for assistance on practical matters.[468] In 1991, the Cuban anthropologist López Valdés suggested that about 90 percent of Cuba's population practiced some form of religion and of that 90 percent, a greater number practiced one of the Afro-Cuban religions than "pure Catholicism".[469] In 2004, Wedel suggested that practitioners of Santería "greatly outnumber" those who practiced Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, or Judaism in Cuba.[470]

Although also found in rural areas,[471] in Cuba Santería has always been a primarily urban phenomenon,[33] predominating in the north-west provinces of La Habana and Matanzas.[472] While it has both Afro-Cuban and Euro-Cuban followers,[473] Wedel noted that in the 1990s Santería was "more common in working-class, low-income neighborhoods dominated by Afro-Cubans." [474] Wedel believed that men and women practice in roughly equal numbers.[475] Some practitioners grow up in Santería as the children of initiates, although others only approach the religion as adults.[476] While it accepts new followers, Santería is a non-proselytizing religion.[477]

Emigration has spread Santería across most of Latin America and also to the United States and Europe.[478] In Mexico, it established a particular presence in Veracruz and Mexico City,[479] in Canada it centred in Toronto,[480] while in Europe ilés have been formed in Spain[163] and Germany.[481] Santería was present in the U.S. by the 1940s, [482] increasing its presence following the Cuban Revolution.[483] Clustering in Florida, California, New Jersey, and New York,[163] it attracted converts from varied ethnic backgrounds.[484] U.S. ilés vary in their ethnic makeup,[166] often reflecting broader racial divisions in U.S. society.[485] Based on his ethnographic work in New York City during the 1980s, Samuel Gregory noted that there Santería was not a "religion of the poor", but contained a disproportionately high percentage of middle-class people such

as teachers, social workers, and artists.[486] The American Religious Identification Survey of 2001 estimated that there were then approximately 22,000 practitioners in the U.S.,[487] although in the mid-1990s the scholar Joseph Murphy suggested that hundreds of thousands of people in the country had engaged with Santería in some form, often as clients.[488]

Reception

The interior of the Templo Yemalla, a Santería temple in Trinidad, Cuba
By the late 1980s, Santería had received considerable interest from established Christian churches, health professionals, and social scientists.[489] Some initiates mistrusted academics and were thus either vague or deliberately misleading in their answers to the latter's questions,[490] although the 1990s saw non-Cuban ethnographers seeking initiation into the religion, thus blurring the distinction between practitioner and anthropological observer.[491] The religion was also explored in other media; the Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando released the film *Oggún* in 1992.[492] Various songs have referenced Santería and its oricha; the Cuban American singer Celia Cruz for example recorded a version of "Que viva Chango" ("Long Live Chango"), [493] while a Cuban band called themselves Los Orichas.[494] Santería's influence can also be seen in the names of the Cuban liquor Santero and the state-owned machete factory Ogún.[494]

Christian views of Santería have been largely negative,[495] and in Cuba, it has faced much opposition from the Roman Catholic clerical establishment over the centuries. [496] Many Cuban intellectuals and academics also take a dim view of Santería.[497] Opposition to the religion is also evident outside Cuba. When the International Afro-Caribbean Festival in Veracruz was launched in 1994, it showcased art and ritual by Mexican santeros/santeras, although this brought public protests from Roman Catholic organizations, who regarded such rites as Satanic, and animal welfare groups, who deemed the sacrifices to be inhumane. The festival's organizers yielded to the pressure, cutting the Santería elements of the festival by 1998.[498] Pervasive stereotypes link Santería to criminal activity,[499] and its rituals for self-protection have been adopted by various groups involved in narcotics trafficking within the U.S.[158] Santeros and santeras are often accused of financially exploiting their initiates and clients—an accusation sometimes made by other practitioners of Santería itself.[500] Various practitioners have also found that their involvement in Santería has strained their relationship with spouses or other family members who are not involved,[115] and in some cases adherents have abandoned Santería to join other religious movements such as Pentecostalism.[501]

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Notes

The spelling "orisha" is widely favored for the deities venerated in West Africa; it is sometimes also used for all traditions venerating these deities globally. The alternative spelling "oricha" is more commonly used in discussing Cuban Santería specifically.

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Santería

Regla de Osha

Figura de Yemayá en Trinidad. La veneración de objetos-fetiche es un aspecto de la santería.

Deidad o deidades principales El panteón Orisha, coronado por Olodumare u Olorún (literalmente, «omnipotente» en yoruba), deidad principal y creadora, de la cual es emisaria el resto del panteón.

Ramas principales Los orisha

Los ifá

Tipo Politeísmo

Seguidores conocidos como Santeros

Escrituras sagradas Tradición oral

Lengua litúrgica Lucumí

País o región de origen Cuba y otras zonas del Caribe que recibieron esclavos yoruba durante la época colonial

País con mayor cantidad de seguidores Cuba

Templos Domésticos. Se practica sobre todo en el ámbito privado.

Clero Babalawo

Religiones relacionadas Deriva de la religión yoruba como el candomblé de Brasil, traído por los inmigrantes afroamericanos.

[editar datos en Wikidata]

Puesto de santería en Cuba

Santería en Cuba. Ceremonia de «Cajón de muertos».

Tienda de productos afrocubanos en La Coruña, Galicia, (España).

La santería, culto lucumí o Regla de Osha, Regla Lucumí, Lucumí u Orisha^[1] es una religión de la diáspora africana desarrollada en Cuba a fines del siglo XIX. Sus creencias derivan directamente de la cultura y religión yoruba, de origen africano, que en algunas zonas de la América española se sincretizaron con el catolicismo implantado por la monarquía hispánica,^[2] así como con el espiritismo. No hay una autoridad central que controle la santería y existe una gran diversidad entre los practicantes, que se conocen como creyentes.^[3]entre los que se encuentran diferentes grados de iniciación como aleyos, oloshas y babalawos.

La santería es politeísta y gira en torno a deidades llamadas orishas. Estas derivan sus nombres y atributos de las divinidades tradicionales yoruba y son sincretizadas con santos católicos. Se cree que cada ser humano tiene un vínculo personal con un orisha concreto que influye en su personalidad y destino y una vez que se realizan ciertos pasos y ya es de conocimiento para la persona quien es su orisha tutelar, este pasa a

ser su guía. Se narran varios mitos sobre estos orishas que se consideran una parte de Olodumare, una deidad creadora trascendente. Se cree que Olodumare es la fuente última del aché(la fuerza sobrenatural que impregna el universo y que se invoca a través de ciertos rituales y ofrendas a través de los Orishas). Los practicantes veneran a los orisha en altares, ya sea en el hogar o en la casa (templo) o en los lugares naturales donde se manifiesta su energía primogenia. Los receptáculo de orisha llegan a estar en posesión de la persona cuando está ya se inició en un proceso que se llama kariosha dónde después de un periodo bajo normas y cumplimientos la persona pasa a ser Olosha (santero o santera) y luego expande su casa religiosa según las costumbres y tradición de sus mayores que le iniciaron. No siempre la pertenencia a una casa religiosa requiere una iniciación. Las ofrendas a los orisha incluyen velas, fruta, licor, flores obediencia y en casos específicos el sacrificio de algún animal específico el cual después del ritual es apto para el consumo. Un ritual central es el toque al orisha, una fiesta realizada con tambores o güiros en el que los practicantes cantan y bailan en honor a un orisha y llaman a sus divinas espiritualidades ya que en la creencia la música libera y purifica el alma de los presentes. Se utilizan varias formas de adivinación u oráculos principalmente el diloggún de orisha manejado por los oloshas y por los mayores sacerdotes dentro del campo de la santería "los Oriateces" y el oráculo de Ifá el ekueke o okpele manejado por los mayores sacerdotes de Ifá los babalawos para descifrar los mensajes de los orishas. También se hacen ofrendas a los espíritus de los ancestros principalmente a los precursores de la santería en Cuba y los ancestros familiares, y algunos practicantes se identifican como médiums espirituales y trabajan el campo espiritual directamente a través de lo que se conoce como misa espiritual, ceremonia de purificación muy ligada al catolicismo donde se busca realzar con la luz divina a X espíritu en pos de que su nuevo paso en araorun(reino espiritual) siempre sea llevadero y puro. Otros rituales dentro de tan bella religión son los de curación y la preparación de remedios herbales y talismanes que desempeñan asimismo un papel importante.[4]

La santería se desarrolló como el culto propio de los afrocubanos, cuyos antepasados habían sido esclavizados durante la época colonial, entre los siglos XVI y XIX. Forma parte del grupo de religiones afroamericanas. La santería comenzó a ser practicada por los antiguos esclavos negros y sus descendientes en la mitad occidental de la isla de Cuba (La Habana), esta religión reformada en Cuba que busca la unificación entre sus practicantes es la que más se extendió hasta el oriente del país y luego por las demás colonias a la llegada de los yoruba en el Caribe (Puerto Rico, República Dominicana, Venezuela y Panamá) la santería cubana hoy se practica en la mayoría de países del mundo como México, Argentina, Nicaragua, Colombia, Chile, Perú, inclusive gran parte del continente asiático y europeo. Se formó a partir de la mezcla de las religiones tradicionales traídas a Cuba por los africanos occidentales esclavizados, la mayoría de ellos yoruba, y el catolicismo, la única religión legalmente permitida en la isla por el gobierno colonial español. En las zonas urbanas del occidente de Cuba, estas tradiciones se fusionaron con ideas espiritistas para formar las primeras casas a finales del siglo XIX. En la Cuba colonial, sus rituales se debían practicar en la clandestinidad porque era marginalizada y perseguida por el yugo de la Iglesia católica. Después de

que la guerra de Independencia cubana diera lugar a una república independiente en 1898, su nueva constitución consagró la libertad de culto. Sin embargo, la santería siguió siendo marginada por el establecimiento católico y eurocubano de Cuba, que la consideraba brujería. En la década de 1960, la creciente emigración que siguió a la Revolución cubana provocó la emigración de santeros a España, los Estados Unidos e Italia, entre otros,[5] difundiendo la santería en el extranjero. El comunismo trajo consigo la secularización, de manera que desde mitad del siglo XX su consideración social ha cambiado favorablemente y ahora muchos santeros de todo el mundo peregrinan a la isla de Cuba. A finales del siglo XX, la santería se vinculó cada vez más con tradiciones afines de África Occidental y América, como el vudú haitiano y el candomblé brasileño. Desde finales del siglo XX, algunos practicantes han hecho hincapié en un proceso de «yorubización» para eliminar las influencias católicas y crear formas de santería más cercanas a la religión tradicional yoruba sin perder la esencia de la santería legada a los descendientes cubanos de los africanos que hicieron dichas fusiones para evitar perder su culto y deidades.

Actualmente, las religiones principales en Cuba son la religión católica y la Santería Afrocubana o yoruba criolla, sin que tengan que ser excluyentes, al menos por parte de los practicantes de la religión afrocubana. Con todo, la Iglesia católica no reconoce a la santería como culto cristiano, sino pagano.[nota 1] Los practicantes de la santería se encuentran principalmente en las provincias cubanas de La Habana y Matanzas, aunque existen comunidades en toda la isla y en el extranjero, especialmente entre las diásporas cubanas de México, Estados Unidos y España. La religión sigue siendo más común entre las comunidades afrocubanas de clase trabajadora, aunque también la practican individuos de otras clases y orígenes étnicos. Se calcula que el número de iniciados es de varios cientos de miles. Estos iniciados actúan como devotos, adivinos y curanderos para un abanico mucho más amplio de adeptos con distintos niveles de fidelidad, lo que hace difícil determinar el número exacto de practicantes de la santería. Muchos de ellos también se identifican como practicantes de otra religión, normalmente el catolicismo.

Terminología

Durante la pertenencia a la corona hispánica era común referirse a ella como culto lucumí, que proviene de la expresión yoruba oloku mi («amigo mío»).[8] Los españoles la denominaron despectivamente «santería», para burlarse de la aparente devoción excesiva que mostraban los seguidores a sus santos.[8]

Asimismo se la llama Regla de Ocha (u Osha)-Ifá. En algunas ocasiones, los practicantes de la santería prefieren ser conocidos por las sociedades secretas a las que pertenecen, por ejemplo: Abakuá (en Cuba) y Amigos de San Lázaro (en Puerto Rico).[9]

Este término se ha difundido alrededor del mundo, aunque también con otra acepción: santero o imaginero es la persona que confecciona las imágenes de los santos católicos.[10]

Historia

La santería deriva de la unión de varias prácticas religiosas de distintas etnias provenientes de África, aunque la predominante de todas ellas es la religión yoruba, que se practica por la etnia homónima en la Guinea africana (Ilè Yorùbá), actual Nigeria, Benín y Togo desde hace miles de años. Los yorubas alcanzaron su apogeo cultural y político durante los periodos del Reino de Benín y el Imperio oyo (disuelto en el siglo XIX, momento en el que se intensificaría la inmigración africana a América),[9] en los cuales se daba el inhumano comercio de esclavos africanos, para ser llevados en masa al Nuevo Mundo.

Época virreinal

Cuba, la isla caribeña de la que procede la santería

Tras la conquista de Cuba por el Imperio español, las poblaciones arahuacas y siboney de la isla disminuyeron drásticamente.[11] Para conseguir una nueva fuente de mano de obra para las plantaciones de azúcar, tabaco y café que habían establecido en Cuba, los españoles recurrieron entonces a la compra de esclavos vendidos en los puertos del África Occidental.[12] La esclavitud estaba muy extendida en el África Occidental; la mayoría de los esclavos eran prisioneros de guerra capturados en conflictos con grupos vecinos, aunque algunos eran criminales convictos.[13] Los primeros africanos esclavizados llegaron a Cuba en 1511,[14] si bien la mayor parte llegó en el siglo XIX.[15] Cuba siguió recibiendo nuevos esclavos hasta al menos 1860,[14] y la emancipación total se produjo en 1886.[16] En total, entre 702 000 y 1 millón de africanos esclavizados fueron llevados a Cuba.[17] La mayoría procedía de una franja del África occidental situada entre los actuales países de Guinea y Angola.[18] La gran mayoría eran yorubas, procedentes de la zona comprendida por las actuales Nigeria y Benín;[19] los yorubas tenían una lengua y una cultura compartidas, pero estaban divididos entre diferentes países.[20] Se adherían en gran medida a la religión tradicional yoruba,[21] que incorporaba muchos cultos locales a los orishas, si bien ciertos orishas eran adorados ampliamente debido a la extensión del Imperio oyo, liderado por los yoruba.[22]

En Cuba, los esclavos eran divididos en grupos denominados naciones, a menudo con base en su puerto de embarque más que en su origen etnocultural real;[23] los que eran de habla yoruba, así como los de los pueblos Arará e Igbo, eran identificados como la «nación lucumí».[24] Los africanos occidentales esclavizados llevaron consigo sus religiones tradicionales a Cuba;[25] algunos pertenecían a la clase sacerdotal y poseían conocimientos de tradiciones como Ifá.[21] Aunque se adoraban cientos de orishas en toda África Occidental, menos de veinte llegaron a ser prominentes en la santería, quizás porque muchos cultos de orishas basados en el parentesco se perdieron cuando las redes de parentesco tradicionales fueron destruidas por la esclavitud.[26] Los orishas asociados a la agricultura se abandonaron, probablemente porque los esclavos tenían pocos motivos para proteger las cosechas de los esclavistas.[27] Muchos mitos asociados a los orishas se transformaron, creando

relaciones de parentesco entre diferentes orishas que no estaban presentes en las mitologías del África Occidental.[28] A medida que se formaba la santería, distintos cultos de los orishas del África Occidental se reconstituyeron en un único sistema religioso,[29] que contaba con un panteón de orishas recién tipificado.[30]

En la Cuba española, el catolicismo era la única religión que podía practicarse legalmente.[31] La Iglesia católica de Cuba hizo esfuerzos por convertir a los africanos esclavizados, pero la instrucción en el catolicismo que se les impartía era normalmente superficial y esporádica.[23] En Cuba, las deidades tradicionales africanas siguieron siendo veneradas probablemente en clubes y organizaciones fraternales formadas por emigrantes africanos y sus descendientes.[32] Las más importantes eran los cabildos de nación, asociaciones que la clase gobernante consideraba un medio para controlar a la población afrocubana.[33] Funcionaban como sociedades de ayuda mutua y organizaban fiestas comunales, bailes y carnavales.[34] La Iglesia católica veía en estas agrupaciones un método de evangelización gradual, a través del cual toleraba la práctica de algunas costumbres africanas mientras erradicaba aquellas a las que se oponía más ferozmente.[35] Es probable que en estos grupos sacerdotes de diferentes orishas del África Occidental interactuaran y comenzaran a desarrollar un nuevo sistema.[36]

La religión católica fue la única aceptada por España en sus posesiones americanas. A los esclavos africanos se les prohibió practicar religiones que no fuesen la cristiana; sin embargo, no fueron del todo suprimidas, pues el animismo seguía siendo practicado clandestinamente en los hogares yoruba. Hay que tener en cuenta que desde África llegaron también sacerdotes yorubas e incluso Obas, es decir, reyes locales.[9] Debido a esta imposición religiosa (y para burlar el veto), los esclavos identificaron en el santoral católico un panteón equivalente al panteón yoruba, asociando cada deidad o energía africana a un santo cristiano. De esta manera pudieron seguir practicando la santería, llamada otrora «religión (de los) lucumí».[37]

Algo parecido ocurrió en Brasil con el Candomblé.[cita requerida]

Se tiene poca constancia escrita de la santería de esta época porque estaba prohibida. Se desconoce el número de fieles de aquella época, aunque esclavos africanos llegaron alrededor de 500 000 a los puertos de Cuba entre 1740 y 1840. Durante el siglo XIX se acabó de configurar la nueva religión santera al oeste de la Isla de Cuba (en las actuales provincias de La Habana y Matanzas, donde habría asentados una mayor cantidad de esclavos de origen yoruba, que se expandió más tarde a la mitad oriental. A Santiago de Cuba llegaron de la mano del santero Raynés, a principios del siglo XX.[9]

Esclavos africanos trabajando en una plantación de caña de azúcar en 1899. Las leyes españolas, al mismo tiempo que permitían la esclavitud, trataban de suavizar esa injusticia concediendo algunos derechos a los esclavos, al menos en teoría. Tenían

derecho a propiedad privada, al matrimonio y a la seguridad personal. También las leyes exigían que los esclavos fueran bautizados católicos como condición para su entrada legal a las Indias.[cita requerida]

La Iglesia trató de evangelizar a los africanos, pero las condiciones eran muy difíciles. Sin embargo, la Iglesia católica en Cuba se encontró en una situación muy precaria.[5] Además de la escasez de sacerdotes, la injusticia de la esclavitud dificultaba que los lucumí aceptaran lo que se les imponía.[5] Más allá de los motivos detrás de la iniciativa evangelizadora, los hombres que promulgaban la fe cristiana entre los esclavos, pertenecían a la misma raza y en muchas ocasiones a los mismos círculos sociales que los esclavistas. El resultado fue que muchos aceptaron exteriormente las enseñanzas católicas mientras interiormente mantenían su antigua religión.[cita requerida]

A finales del siglo XVIII y principios del XIX, nuevas leyes restringieron las actividades de los cabildos,[38] aunque su número de miembros aumentó en el siglo XIX.[39] En las últimas décadas del siglo XIX también creció el interés por el espiritismo, una religión basada en las ideas del escritor francés Allan Kardec, que en Cuba resultó especialmente popular entre el campesinado blanco, la clase criolla y la pequeña clase media urbana.[40] Ideas del espiritismo se filtraron e influyeron cada vez más en la santería.[41]

Formación e historia temprana

Las primeras casas de enseñanza de la santería surgieron en zonas urbanas del occidente de Cuba a finales del siglo XIX.[42] Al surgir un sacerdocio entrenado, aseguraron un nivel de estandarización entre los nuevos iniciados.[36] Si bien se inspiraba en cultos más antiguos de África Occidental, la santería era, como describe Clark, «un nuevo sistema religioso».[43] La migración del campo a la ciudad difundió la santería en otros lugares de Cuba,[44] y en la década de 1930 probablemente llegó a la segunda ciudad más grande de Cuba, Santiago de Cuba, situada en el extremo oriental de la isla.[45]

Tras la Guerra de Independencia, la isla se convirtió en una república independiente en 1898. En la república, los afrocubanos siguieron en gran medida estando excluidos del poder económico y político,[46] y los estereotipos negativos sobre ellos siguieron siendo generalizados entre la población eurocubana.[47] Las prácticas religiosas de los afrocubanos solían ser llamadas brujería y se pensaba que estaban relacionadas con la delincuencia.[48] En 1901 se publica la Primera Constitución cubana, en cuyo artículo 26 permite la libre profesión religiosa.[49] También la Constitución de 1940, promulgada por el dictador Batista, declaró al país como un estado laico, aunque permitió la enseñanza privada cristiana y el ejercicio de todos los cultos excepto aquellos que no respeten la moral cristiana (art. 35).[50] Este detalle hizo que la santería fuese, en la práctica, ilegal.[5] Si bien la nueva constitución de la república consagraba la libertad de culto y la nunca se crearon leyes en contra de la santería, a lo largo de la primera mitad del siglo XX se lanzaron varias campañas contra ella.[51] Estas campañas fueron a

menudo alentadas por la prensa, que promovió las acusaciones de que niños blancos eran secuestrados y sacrificados en rituales de santería;[52] esto alcanzó un punto álgido en 1904, tras el asesinato de dos niños blancos en La Habana en casos que los investigadores especularon que estaban relacionados con la brujería.[53]

Uno de los primeros intelectuales en examinar la santería fue el abogado y etnógrafo Fernando Ortiz Fernández, que la analizó en su libro de 1906 Los negros brujos.[54] La consideraba un obstáculo para la integración social de los afrocubanos en la sociedad cubana en general y recomendaba su supresión.[55] En la década de 1920, se hicieron esfuerzos por incorporar elementos de la cultura afrocubana a una comprensión más amplia de la cultura cubana, por ejemplo, a través del movimiento literario y artístico del afrocubanismo. A menudo se inspiraban en la música, la danza y la mitología afrocubanas, pero solían rechazar los rituales de santería.[56] En 1942 se publicó el Manual de santería de Rómulo Lachatañeré, que representó el primer intento académico de entender la santería como una religión;[57] a diferencia de Ortiz, sostenía que la tradición debía verse como un sistema religioso y no como una forma de brujería.[58] Lachatañeré contribuyó a promover el término Santería para referirse al fenómeno, considerándolo una descripción más neutra que los términos cargados de peyorativos como brujería, entonces de uso común.[59]

Ejemplo de sincretización: altar dedicado a San Lázaro-Babalú Ayé, en el Valle de Viñales (Pinar del Río, Cuba).

En «El Gran Libro de la Santería» de Delgado Torres[60] el autor describió la Oración a San Froilán, donde expone y demuestra que dicho santo, desde el punto de vista del sincretismo, pudiera de una manera sincretizarse con la deidad yoruba Ossaín, lo cual acentúa todo este estudio la universalidad de la teología de la Santería, una de las herederas de la cultura yoruba, es decir, la Santería Cubana.[61]

Según Mercedes Sandoval, la santería acabó calando también entre la población blanca y mestiza de Cuba por cuestiones de salud, puesto que una de las principales funciones de los santeros es la curación por la fe.[9] También fue importante la difusión de la música, la mitología y demás idiosincrasias yoruba por la población que no era estrictamente negra, estudiosos elevan a 70 el porcentaje de cubanos que tienen algún tipo de relación más o menos cercana con la santería.

Véase también: Demografía de Cuba

Tras la Revolución cubana

Véase también: Chavismo y la santería

La Revolución cubana de 1959 hizo que la isla se convirtiera en un estado marxista-leninista gobernado por el Partido Comunista de Cuba de Fidel Castro.[62]

Comprometido con el ateísmo estatal, el gobierno de Castro adoptó una opinión negativa de la santería.[63] Los practicantes sufrieron el acoso de la policía,[64] se les negó la afiliación al Partido Comunista[65] y se les limitaron las oportunidades de empleo.[66] Los creyentes necesitaban permiso de la policía para realizar rituales, que

a veces se les negaba.[67] No obstante, el Estado promovió formas artísticas asociadas a la santería con la esperanza de utilizarlas para promover una identidad cubana unificada.[68] El gobierno castrista, a la vez que defendía el antirracismo, consideraba que la promoción de una identidad afrocubana separada era contrarrevolucionaria.[69]

Tras el colapso de la Unión Soviética en la década de 1990, el gobierno de Castro declaró que Cuba entraba en un «periodo especial» en el que serían necesarias nuevas medidas económicas. Como parte de esto, apoyó selectivamente las tradiciones afrocubanas y de santería, en parte por el deseo de impulsar el turismo;[70] este turismo centrado en la santería se denominó santurismo.[71] Sacerdotes de santería, Ifá y Palo participaron en giras patrocinadas por el gobierno para extranjeros que deseaban iniciarse en dichas tradiciones, mientras que espectáculos afrocubanos se hicieron comunes en los hoteles cubanos.[64] En 1991, el Partido Comunista aprobó la admisión de miembros religiosos, y en 1992 se modificó la constitución para declarar a Cuba como un estado laico en vez de ateo.[72] Esta liberalización permitió que la santería dejara atrás su marginalización,[73] y durante la década de 1990 comenzó a practicarse más abiertamente.[74]

El teólogo Frei Betto, en su libro *Fidel y la religión* (1985), escribió sobre la relación de Fidel Castro con la santería. Comenta que no era practicante, pero sí se inició. Muchos santeros que apoyaron la Revolución comunista vieron en él un liberador espiritual para Cuba,[75] considerándolo hijo de la deidad Elegguá.[76]

En la segunda mitad del siglo XX, se apreció una creciente conciencia de los vínculos de la santería con otras religiones que rinden culto a los orishas en África Occidental y América.[77] Estos vínculos transnacionales se reforzaron cuando el Ooni de Ife (el gobernante tradicional de Ile-Ife y jefe espiritual del pueblo yoruba), Olubuse II, un destacado líder político y religioso yoruba, visitó Cuba en 1987.[78] El gobierno cubano permitió la formación de la Asociación Cultural Yoruba, una organización no gubernamental, a principios de la década de 1990, mientras que varios practicantes de la santería visitaron Nigeria para estudiar la religión tradicional yoruba.[79] Surgió un proceso de «yorubización», con intentos de eliminar los elementos católicos de la santería;[77] este proceso fue criticado por quienes veían el sincretismo de la santería como un rasgo positivo.[80]

Asimismo, con el triunfo de la revolución comunista en Cuba en 1959, más de un millón de cubanos se exiliaron en otros países (principalmente en las ciudades de Miami, Nueva York y Los Ángeles). Entre ellos, había santeros que propagaron la Santería en sus nuevos ambientes.[cita requerida] La Revolución Cubana impulsó la emigración cubana, especialmente a Estados Unidos, Puerto Rico, México, Colombia y Venezuela. [81] Con el aumento de la presencia cubana en Estados Unidos, la santería creció en muchas ciudades del país, siendo adoptada por hispanoamericanos, así como por europeos y afroamericanos.[82] Algunos afroamericanos la consideraban una religión auténticamente africana, sobre todo cuando se purgaba de los elementos católicos,[83] y a veces la percibían como un ala religiosa del movimiento del Poder Negro.[84] Un

destacado exponente de este enfoque fue el activista nacionalista negro Walter King. Tras ser iniciado en Cuba, estableció un templo en Harlem antes de trasladarse con sus seguidores en 1970 a una comunidad en Sheldon, Carolina del Sur, que llamaron el Pueblo Yoruba de Oyotunji. Al tener una relación tensa con muchos otros santeros y santeras, que le acusaban de racismo, King pasó a llamar a su tradición «Orisha-Vudú» en lugar de Santería.[85] En Estados Unidos, la santería, junto con el vudú haitiano, también influyó en el renacimiento del vudú de Luisiana a finales del siglo XX. Una de las figuras más destacadas de este renacimiento, Ava Kay Jones, había participado anteriormente en el Orisha-Vudú de King.[86]

Actualidad

Joven cubana con un vestido blanco, que indica que está recién bautizada en la santería.

Hoy en día, la santería se da en diversas zonas de América, incluido lugares con gran población hispana de Estados Unidos (Florida, Nueva York, San Francisco, Nueva Orleans, Los Ángeles, Miami y San Diego).[cita requerida]

En 1992, el académico nigeriano Wándé Abímbólá (profesor de la Universidad de Lagos y estudioso de la cultura y lengua yoruba) afirmó que «existen más babalawos en Puerto Rico que en Nigeria».[9] Los babalawos cubanos llegaron a Puerto Rico en los años 1960.

Actualmente, la religión cuenta con presencia también en España, especialmente en Canarias por su estrecha relación con Cuba, México, Países Bajos, Alemania, Inglaterra, Francia, y otros países en los cuales hay un número considerable de inmigrantes cubanos. En Venezuela, en la región de Caracas es donde se concentra la mayor cantidad de santeros y babalawos en el país pero también se encuentran en Cumaná, Coro y Maracay.[87]

Doctrina

Los pilares fundamentales de la religión se basan en el culto a los ancestros muertos (egúns) y en el conocimiento de que existe un Dios único (Oloddumare) y se relaciona con los seres humanos a través de extensiones del mismo, que también son divinidades, a las cuales los yorubas denominaron orishás. Por estas características, se considera que es una religión politeísta.[cita requerida]

Los que profesan la santería creen en el determinismo, es decir, que las vidas vienen determinadas desde antes de nacer, así como en la reencarnación.[5]

Olodumare y los orisha

La santería cree en una fuerza o dios universal del que proviene todo lo creado, llamado Olodumare (del yoruba, oloddumare; literalmente, «el omnipotente»), Olofi u Olorun.[88] Los practicantes creen que esta divinidad creó el universo, pero se interesa poco por los asuntos humanos.[89] En tanto esta deidad creadora es inaccesible para

la humanidad,[90] no se le dedican grandes ofrendas.[90] Las tres facetas de esta divinidad se entienden de forma ligeramente diferente: Olodumare representa la esencia divina de todo lo que existe, Olorun se considera el creador de todos los seres, mientras que Olofi habita en toda la creación.[91] Al adoptar una forma tripartita, esta deidad muestra similitudes con la Trinidad cristiana.[91]

Los orisha

Véase también: Panteón yoruba

La santería es politeísta[92] y gira en torno a deidades llamadas orisha,[93] ocha[94] o santos.[95] El término orisha puede ser tanto singular como plural, porque el lucumí, el lenguaje ritual de la santería, carece de marcadores de plural para los sustantivos.[96] Los practicantes creen que algunos orisha fueron creados antes que la humanidad, mientras que otros eran originalmente humanos que se convirtieron en orisha por alguna cualidad notable.[97] Algunos practicantes perciben a los orisha como facetas de Olodumare, y por tanto creen que al venerarlos están adorando en última instancia al dios creador.[25] Algunos orisha son femeninos, otros masculinos.[98] No se les considera totalmente benévolos, ya que son capaces tanto de dañar como de ayudar a los humanos,[99] y muestran una mezcla de emociones, virtudes y vicios.[100]

Ofrendas ante una estatua de San Lázaro, que representa al orisha Babalú Ayé,[101] en La Habana

Mitos de origen y otras historias sobre los orichas reciben el nombre de patakíes.[102] Se entiende que cada oricha «gobierna» un aspecto particular del universo,[94] y se les ha descrito como personificaciones de diferentes facetas del mundo natural.[103] Viven en un reino llamado orún, que se contrapone al ayé, el reino de la humanidad.[104] Cada orisha tiene sus propios caminos[105] o manifestaciones,[106] un concepto similar al de los avatares hindúes.[107] El número de caminos que tiene un orisha varía, y algunos tienen varios cientos.[108] Los practicantes creen que los orisha pueden habitar físicamente ciertos objetos, entre ellos piedras y conchas de cauri, que se consideran sagrados.[109] Cada orisha también está asociado a canciones, ritmos, colores, números, animales y comidas específicos.[110]

Entre los orisha se encuentran las cuatro «deidades guerreras», o guerros: Elegguá, Oggun, Oshosi y Osun. Elegguá es considerado el guardián de los cruces de caminos y los umbrales;[111] es el mensajero entre la humanidad y los orisha, y la mayoría de las ceremonias comienzan solicitando su permiso para continuar.[112] Se le representa de color negro por un lado y rojo por el otro,[113] y los practicantes suelen colocar una cabeza de cemento decorada con conchas de cauri que representa a Elegguá detrás de las puertas principales, custodiando el umbral de la calle.[114] El segundo guerro es Oggun, considerado como el orisha de las armas y la guerra,[115] y también del hierro y los herreros.[116] El tercero, Oshosi, se asocia con los bosques y la caza,[117] mientras que el cuarto, Osun, es un protector que avisa a los practicantes cuando están en peligro.[118]

Siendo quizá el orisha más popular,[119]Changó o Shango se asocia con el rayo y el fuego.[120] Otra orisha destacada es Yemayá, la deidad asociada a la maternidad, la fertilidad y el mar.[121]Ochún es la orisha de los ríos y del amor romántico,[122] mientras que Oíá es un guerrero asociado con el viento, el rayo y la muerte, y es visto como el guardián del cementerio.[123] Obatalá es orisha de la verdad y la justicia y se le considera responsable de ayudar a moldear la humanidad.[124] Babalú Ayé es el orisha asociado a la enfermedad y su curación,[125] mientras que Ossaín está vinculado a las hierbas y la curación.[126] Orula es el orisha de la adivinación, que en la mitología de la santería estuvo presente en la creación de la humanidad y, por tanto, conoce el destino de todos.[127] Ibeyí adopta la forma de gemelos que protegen a los niños.[126] Olokún es el orisha patrón de los mercados, mientras que su esposa Olosá está asociada a las lagunas.[126] Agagyú es el orisha de los volcanes y los páramos. [126] Algunos orisha se consideran antagónicos a otros; Changó y Oggun son, por ejemplo, enemigos.[128]

Aunque en la santería el término santo se considera un sinónimo de orisha y no es una referencia literal a los santos cristianos,[129] los orisha son equiparados o fusionados a menudo con uno o más santos católicos basándose en atributos similares.[130] Por ejemplo, el Santo Niño de Atocha, una representación de Cristo como niño, se fusiona con Elegguá, a quien se considera de naturaleza infantil.[131] Babalú Ayé, que se asocia con la enfermedad, se identifica a menudo con el santo católico Lázaro, que resucitó de entre los muertos, mientras que Changó se fusiona con Santa Bárbara porque ambos visten de rojo.[132] La santa patrona de Cuba, Nuestra Señora de la Caridad, se fusiona con Ochún.[133] Se ha afirmado que los esclavos yorubas vincularon inicialmente sus deidades tradicionales con los santos cristianos como un medio de ocultar a las autoridades españolas el culto que seguían rindiendo a las primeras,[134] o como medio de facilitar la movilidad social al asimilarse a las normas sociales católicas.[135]

Los orishás, además, velan para que cada mortal cumpla el destino que tiene marcado desde su nacimiento.[cita requerida]

La identificación de los orishás con los santos más conocidos tiene razones muy simples, que se relacionan con el aspecto o las acciones de los santos:[cita requerida]

Orishas Oddé («guerreros»)

Eshu

Elegguá (San Antonio de Padua)

Oggun (San Pedro)

Oshosi (San Norberto)

Osun (San Juan Bautista)

Orishas principales («De cabecera»)

Obbatalá (Virgen de las Mercedes)

Oshun (Virgen de la Caridad)

Shangó (Santa Bárbara)
Yemayá (Virgen de Regla)
Oyá (Virgen de la Candelaria)
Orishas mayores

Inle (San Rafael o San Roque)
Iroko (la Purísima Concepción)
Naná Burukú (Santa Ana)
Obba
Oduduwa (San Norberto)
Olokun
Orisha oko (San Isidro Labrador)
Orishas menores

Abita (el Diablo)
Ajá
Ajé Shalunga
Aroni
Ayaó
Boromú y Boronsiá
Dadá (San Ramón)
Ibeyis (San Damián)
Irunmoles
Korikoto
Logun Ede
Obañeñe
Ogbón y Ogboni
Oggue
Oke
Oranmiyán
Ori
Oroiña
Orungan
Oshumare (San Bartolomé)
Yembó
Otras manifestaciones orisha

Olodumare (el Gran Poder de Dios)
Olofin (Jesucristo)
Olorun (el Espíritu Santo)
Orula (San Francisco de Asís)
Ikú (la Muerte)
Eggun (espíritus de los ancestros)
Oro (u Orun)
Iyami Oshooronga

Aggayú Solá (San Cristóbal)

Babalú Ayé[nota 2] (San Lázaro)

Relaciones con los orichas

La santería se centra en cultivar una relación recíproca con los orisha,[94] ya que los seguidores creen que estas deidades pueden interceder en los asuntos humanos y ayudar a las personas si se les apacigua.[97] Los practicantes sostienen que cada persona «nace de» un orisha en particular, se sea devoto o no a esa deidad.[136] Se trata de una conexión que, según los adeptos, se ha establecido antes del nacimiento.[137] Los practicantes se refieren a este orisha como el que «gobierna la cabeza» de una persona;[94] es el «dueño de su cabeza».[138] Si el orisha es masculino, se describe como el «padre» del individuo; si el orisha es femenino, es la «madre» de la persona.[139] Se considera que este orisha influye en la personalidad del individuo, y puede reconocerse examinando los rasgos de la personalidad de la persona[140] o mediante la adivinación.[141]

Para obtener la protección de un orisha concreto, se anima a los practicantes a hacerle ofrendas, a patrocinar ceremonias en su honor y a vivir de acuerdo con sus deseos, tal y como se determinan mediante la adivinación.[142] A los practicantes les preocupa la posibilidad de ofender a los orishas.[143] Los creyentes creen que los orisha pueden comunicarse con los humanos a través de la adivinación, las oraciones, los sueños, la música y la danza.[144] Muchos practicantes también describen cómo «leen» mensajes de los orisha en las interacciones y acontecimientos cotidianos.[145] Por ejemplo, un practicante que pasa junto un niño en un cruce de tráfico puede interpretarlo como un mensaje de Elegguá, que a menudo se representa como un niño y que se percibe como el «guardián» de los cruces de caminos o calles. En ese momento, el practicante puede recurrir a la adivinación para determinar el significado preciso del encuentro. La información obtenida de estos mensajes puede ayudar a los practicantes a tomar decisiones sobre sus vidas.[146]

El nacimiento y los difuntos

Un altar de santería en Trinidad, Cuba

La santería enseña que la cabeza humana contiene la esencia de la persona, su *eledá*[147] u *orí*. [148] Sostiene que antes de nacer, el *eledá* va ante *Olodumare*, donde se le da su carácter esencial,[148] y forma un vínculo con el orisha que se convierte en «el dueño de su cabeza».[149] El concepto de *eledá* deriva de la religión tradicional yoruba, donde se considera el «doble espiritual» de la persona. En la santería, este concepto se ha sincretizado con las creencias católicas sobre los ángeles de la guarda y nociones espiritistas de las protecciones o espíritus protectores. No existe una ortodoxia estricta sobre esta cuestión y, por tanto, las interpretaciones difieren.[150] Los practicantes suelen creer que cada persona tiene un destino[151] o camino específico, [152] aunque su suerte no está completamente determinada.[151]

La veneración de los ancestros es importante en la santería.[153] La religión implica propiciar a los espíritus de los difuntos, conocidos como *egun*, [154] espíritus[155] o

mueritos.[156] Los practicantes creen que hay que tratar a los difuntos con respeto, temor y amabilidad, y se les consulta en todas las ceremonias.[157] Aunque no se considera que los muertos sean tan poderosos como los orisha, se cree que pueden ayudar a los vivos,[157] con los que pueden comunicarse a través de los sueños, la intuición y la posesión espiritual.[151] La santería enseña que una persona puede aprender a ver y comunicarse con los muertos.[157] Los practicantes suelen hacer ofrendas, normalmente siete vasos de agua, a los egun para aplacarlos y complacerlos. [157] Se propicia especialmente a los egun considerados como ancestros;[94] estos ancestros pueden incluir tanto a los ancestros hereditarios como a antiguos miembros de la propia congregación,[158] y los practicantes creen que un creyente se convierte en ancestro cuando muere.[159]

Los adeptos creen que todo el mundo tiene un cuadro espiritual de egun que les protege.[160] Una persona puede llegar a tener hasta 25 protectores.[137] La religión sostiene que todas las personas tienen múltiples egun que les acompañan en todo momento, y que éstos pueden ser benévolos, malévolos o una mezcla de ambos.[157] Los practicantes también creen que el número y la identidad de estos espíritus pueden determinarse mediante la adivinación.[157] Se distingue entre espíritus evolucionados, que pueden ayudar a aquellos a los que están unidos, y espíritus no evolucionados, que carecen de la sabiduría y la habilidad para ser útiles y, en cambio, causan estragos. [161] La santería enseña que, mediante ofrendas y oraciones, las personas pueden ayudar a algunos de sus espíritus no evolucionados a convertirse en evolucionados. [161] La santería también divide a los espíritus en categorías que exhiben rasgos diferentes, reflejando estereotipos sobre distintos grupos sociales,[151] de manera que tales espíritus a menudo son mostrados como africanos, haitianos, gitanos, árabes o indios.[162] Los espíritus gitanos, por ejemplo, se consideran capaces de prever problemas inminentes y diagnosticar enfermedades, mientras que los espíritus congo de África se perciben como fuertes, poderosos y capaces de guiar a la gente en circunstancias hostiles.[151]

Aché

El ashé o aché es un concepto cosmológico importante en la religión tradicional yoruba y se ha transferido a la santería.[163] El aché se considera el poder organizador del cosmos;[164] las hispanistas Margarite Fernández Olmos y Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert se refirieron a él como «una energía o poder espiritual-místico que se encuentra en diversos grados y en muchas formas en todo el universo».[97] El antropólogo médico Johan Wedel lo describió como «fuerza vital»[165] o «fuerza divina»,[166] mientras que el folclorista Michael Atwood Mason llamó al aché «poder generativo ritual».[25] La etnomusicóloga Katherine Hagedorn describió el aché como «el potencial divino realizado e inherente en todos los aspectos de la vida, incluso en objetos aparentemente inertes».[163] Añadió que «Aché no es bueno ni malo; más bien, aché es movimiento».[159]

Aunque consideran a Olodumare como la máxima encarnación del aché,[167] los creyentes creen que el aché impregna toda la vida[97] y está presente tanto en el

mundo visible como en el invisible.[168] No obstante, se considera que a veces se congrega de forma más densa, por ejemplo, en las fuerzas de la naturaleza, en lugares específicos y en ciertas personas;[168] se cree que los iniciados atraen más aché que otras personas.[163] La santería sostiene que el aché puede emanar del cuerpo humano a través de la palabra, el canto, la danza y el toque de tambores,[169] y que puede ser transmitido mediante actos como el canto de alabanzas a los orisha o el sacrificio de un animal.[170] Entre los practicantes, a veces se describe que el aché transmite nociones de suerte, salud y prosperidad,[166] y tiene el poder de fortalecer la salud de una persona.[171] Es común la expresión «tener aché» en Cuba por «tener suerte».[172]

Moralidad, ética y roles de género

Dos practicantes de la santería participando en una ceremonia de Cajón de Muertos en 2011

La santería tiene normas de comportamiento que se espera de sus practicantes,[173] fomentando conductas influenciadas por las historias mitológicas sobre los orisha.[28] La religión presenta reglas estrictas sobre cómo interactuar con otras personas y con lo sobrenatural,[174] por ejemplo, haciendo hincapié en el respeto a los mayores y a los superiores.[175] Una actitud general en la santería es que si una persona mantiene un buen carácter, los orisha le ayudarán.[176] Los practicantes generalmente adoptan posturas socialmente conservadoras, con gran respeto por las estructuras familiares tradicionales, el matrimonio, la fidelidad y la crianza de los hijos;[177] seguidores en los Estados Unidos suelen adoptar posturas más progresistas en cuestiones de género y sexualidad que sus homólogos de Cuba.[178]

La religión es no-dualista y no considera que el universo esté dividido entre el bien y el mal, sino que todas las cosas se perciben como complementarias y relativas.[179] Varios académicos han descrito la santería como poseedora de un ethos del «aquí y ahora» distinto al del cristianismo,[180] y la científica social Mercedes C. Sandoval sugirió que muchos cubanos y cubanas eligieron la santería en lugar del catolicismo o el espiritismo porque hace hincapié en técnicas para afrontar los problemas pragmáticos de la vida.[181] En Estados Unidos, algunos adeptos afroamericanos han contrastado lo que consideran el ethos de origen africano de la santería con los orígenes no africanos del cristianismo,[182] adoptándola así como una religión fácilmente combinable con el nacionalismo negro.[84]

La estudiosa de la religión Mary Ann Clark categorizó a la santería como una religión «orientada a la mujer y normativa femenina», [183] argumentando que se espera que quienes la practiquen asuman «roles de género femenino» durante sus rituales.[184] Las mujeres pueden ocupar los más altos cargos de liderazgo,[185] aunque se les imponen restricciones cuando están menstruando.[186] También se imponen restricciones similares a los varones homosexuales, prohibiéndoles tradicionalmente participar en ciertas formas de adivinación y en la percusión ritual.[187] Sin embargo, muchos hombres homosexuales son santeros,[188] y algunas santeras son lesbianas.

[187] Existe el estereotipo de que todos los sacerdotes varones de la santería son homosexuales,[189] y miembros de otras tradiciones afrocubanas con una orientación más masculina, como el Palo, la han denigrado a menudo por estar dominada por mujeres y hombres que consideran «afeminados».[190]

Características generales
Organización clerical

Babalawo afrocubano.

Santero en La Habana

La santería tiene una jerarquía sacerdotal. Los sacerdotes son comúnmente conocidos como santeros u olorichas. Aunque se consideren a los Orisha e Ifá como ramas separadas, en ambas los babalawos (ocasionalmente, babalaos) son los máximos sacerdotes de la santería. Una vez que esos sacerdotes han iniciado a otros sacerdotes, se les conoce como babalorichás «padre de orichá» (para hombre) e iyalorichás «madre de orichá» (para mujer), que son santeros con ahijados consagrados. Los iyawos son santeros en su primer año de consagrados, y los aleyos son los creyentes que no se han consagrado. Si practican la adivinación de los orichás, se les denomina italeros.

Todos ellos son santeros, iniciados mediante ritos específicos (léase más abajo), el primero de los cuales es un ritual de purificación y la entrega de cinco collares, representando a Shangó, Obbatalá, Yemayá, Oshún y Elegguá o recibiendo a los orishás guerreros, que son Elegguá, Oggún, Oshosi y Ozun, que son santos consagrados en otanes [piedras].

Babalawo o babalao

El Babalawo (del yoruba: Babaaláwo «padre del secreto»), usualmente deformado a babalao, es la persona iniciada a una deidad e intérprete de deberes y enseñanzas. En la Nigeria yoruba también se les llama simplemente Awo. Originalmente los Awos debían memorizar e interpretación los 256 Odus (escrituras sagradas) y los numerosos versos de Ifá. Tradicionalmente, el Babalawo además tiene otras especialidades profesionales, como por ejemplo, de herborista. El Babalawo, como guía espiritual, psicológico y ético, es entrenado en la determinación de los problemas y en la aplicación de soluciones seculares o espirituales para la resolución de los mismos. Su función primordial es asistir a las personas a encontrar, entender y a procesar la vida hasta que experimenten la sabiduría espiritual como una parte de las experiencias cotidianas.

Babalawos famosos

Al ser una religión tan apartada se tiene poca constancia sobre sus babalaos. Algunos de los más importantes del sacerdocio son:

Ño Remigio Herrera (¿1811?-1905): cuyo nombre original es Adeshina Obara Meyi fue

un babalao de Nigeria y trasladado como esclavo a Matanzas. Fue obligado a bautizarse como Remigio Lucumí. Se cuenta que se tragó sus ikines de sacerdote, por lo que pudo traérselos consigo cuando fue capturado como esclavo.[191]

Ño Carlos Addebí (???-???): originalmente Ojuani Boká contemporáneo a Adeshina, se conocieron y juntos promulgaron la reglá ifá. Consiguió su libertad en Camagüey.

Bernardo Rojas (1881-1959), llamado Irete Tendi: de la segunda generación de babalaos, fue formado por el mismo Adeshina, al cual cuidó hasta su muerte.

Taita Gaitán (???-???): también Oggunda fun, nacido en Matanzas, su padrino fue el babalawo esclavo Lugery (Oyekun Meyi) que consiguió volver a Nigeria.

Enrique Hernández (1918-2017), «Enriquito»: nació en Guanabacoa (Cuba) ciudad con gran presencia santera. También le llamaban Tata Nganga.

Otros babalawos reconocidos son Cornelio Vidal (el primer babalawo criollo, o sea de raza no-negra), Asunción Villalonga, Ramón Febles (Ogbe tua), Panchito Febles (Otura Niko), Miguel Febles, Sevilla Baró (Oshe Yekun), el Chino Poey (Oshe Paure), Felix el Negro (Osa Rete)...

Oráculos y adivinación

La ceremonia Diloggun o de las dieciséis caracolas. El santero usa conchas para comunicarse con los orishas.

La adivinación se da a través de los tres oráculos (ceremonias) que componen la religión. Los babalawos realizan el oráculo de «ifá» (Se adivina con un tablero de ifá, por ejemplo, el «ekuele»). Los santeros realizan el oráculo del «Dilogún» (con caracolas) y el oráculo del «Biagué» (con un coco). Hay otros oráculos orientan al consultador mediante la interpretación de «oddun» o signos.

Fetiches orishas

Véanse también: Vudú y Fetichismo.

La creación de figuras para el uso espiritual es una práctica que se encuentra en religiones de todo el mundo. Estas figuras representan a dioses, fenómenos y espíritus, no a individuos vivos y suelen ser de mayor tamaño y estar realizados en madera, para que perduren y no en tela o materiales frágiles como los fetiches del vudú, cuyo uso y función son sólo temporales.[192]

El vudú es el resultado del sincretismo que se produjo en Haití entre la religión yoruba ("Ocha"), la magia bantú regla de Palo Monte y la magia clásica europea. El resultado es muy parecido a la Quimbanda en Brasil, de origen angoleño o la regla Palo Kimbiza en Cuba de origen congoleño. De hecho la regla Kimbiza cubana tiene cierta influencia haitiana en sus orígenes.

Cada deidad tiene uno o varios objetos asociados, como lo son las plumas de pavo y la miel para Ochún, las conchas para Yemayá, las llaves para Exú o las hachas y los tambores Batá para Changó.[193]

Altar en el Templo de Yemayá (Trinidad, Cuba).

Fetiché de Eshu.

Fetiché de Elegguá.

Virgen negra.

Herbología curativa lucumí

Florifundio (*Brugmansia candida*) es una planta medicinal en la cultura popular cubana. El antropólogo Brian Du Toit publicó en 2001 *Curación Etnomédica (Popular)* en el Caribe, donde afirmaba que «Cuba es una de las regiones en las que se ha realizado una mayor cantidad de investigaciones etnobotánicas».[194] Du Toit cita los estudios de Lydia Cabrera sobre el papel religioso y curativo de las plantas medicinales indígenas, y José Gallo en la compilación de 900 páginas de medicina popular; Las yerbas con propiedades medicinales se llaman ewés. El Florifundio (*Brugmansia candida*) es efectiva como broncodilatador, debido a su contenido de escopolamina y atropina en las hojas. La caña santa, yerba de limón o limoncillo (hierba *Cymbopogon*) se usa para la presión arterial baja y como antiinflamatorio. El té de tomillo y el aceite de ricino se utilizan para el embarazo y la malva té (*Corchorus siliquosus*) induce la rápida expulsión de la placenta.[194]

Hay tres orishas de la curación principalmente (aunque se pueda invocar a otros): Ossaín, el orichá de las hierbas y patrón de curanderos (por ello se les llama osainistas), que está sincretizado con San José, San Benito, San Silvestre o San Jerónimo; Babalú Ayé, el orichá de las enfermedades contagiosas y epidémicas y patrón de las víctimas y supervivientes de la viruela, la lepra y las enfermedades de la piel (también se ha convertido en el patrón de las personas con VIH/sida); e Inle, la patrona de los médicos, del método científico para la curación y de los problemas de salud más específicos. Inle es también la patrona de gays y lesbianas.

Las hierbas también pueden ser usadas para inducir al sacerdote a ser poseído por la deidad (trance) utilizando las propiedades alucinógenas de la trompeta del diablo (*Datura metel*) y el estramonio (*Datura stramonium*). Ambas tienen atropina y escopolamina, más conocido como burundanga, causando amnesia. También son valorados los psicoactivos del sapo de caña (*Bufo marinus*).[194]

Además de ser herbolario, la práctica tradicional de sanación santera tiene un aspecto espiritual. La santería tiene un enfoque holístico, reconociendo la conexión con el corazón, la mente y el cuerpo.[195] Según esta filosofía, el mundo fluye con la energía vital primordial llamada aché o crecimiento, la fuerza hacia la integridad y la divinidad. Aché es la corriente que el canal de Santería inicia para que les permita cumplir su camino en la vida. Cuando una persona está enferma, el sanador piensa, interpreta y reacciona, considerando la enfermedad no solo como una disfunción física, sino también como una interfaz con el sufrimiento y la mala suerte en la vida, que se cree

que es provocada por la actividad de los malos espíritus.

Espiritismo

Du Troit señala que la santería tiene un fuerte componente espiritista. El espiritismo es la creencia popular en América Latina de que los espíritus benignos y malignos pueden afectar a la salud, suerte u otros aspectos de los mortales. No se debe confundir con el espiritismo fundado por Allan Kardec, aunque se basan en una idea parecida.

La reputación de los espiritistas suele ser negativa, ya que se les relaciona con la brujería. Antes de la secularización los curanderos tradicionales de la santería y otras culturas latinoamericanas que trabajan con la curación a través del mundo espiritual se consideraban oficialmente como obradores del diablo desde la Iglesia católica. El modelo único de conocimiento médico es apreciado como un sistema de etnofarmacología o etnomedicina.

Ofrendas adimú

Los adimú suelen envolverse en hojas de maíz.

Los adimú son ofrendas comestibles o sacrificios que se le presenta a los orishas con la finalidad de obtener el bien deseado o de consolidarlo en caso de ya tenerlo. Este bien que aparece en la consulta del diloggun o caracol, puede ser «yale» (completo), o «cotoyale» (incompleto). Se dice Adimú cuando la ofrenda se coloca al pie del orisha que lo haya solicitado; aladimú, si se coloca sobre la deidad.[196]

Algunos ejemplos de adimú son:

El oguidi, también llamado oguede o agguidi es un dulce parecido al tamal que se ofrendan a los orishá de los ancestros, Oya y a Eggun, o también a Oggun. Se prepara con harina de maíz, un poco de vinagre, azúcar moreno, canela en rama, zumo de limón, anís y vainilla envuelto en hojas de plátano y ofrendado con miel o melao de caña. Después se presentan delante de Oya o de la teja de eggun durante los días que se determine al darle coco al santo y después se llevan al cementerio o al lugar que indique la tirada del coco.

El dulce de guayaba y coco para Elegguá.

El eko, de maíz envuelto en hojas de plátano. A Oshun se le presenta con miel, a Obatala con cascarilla (cáscara de huevo pulverizada, producto valorado por los lucumí) y manteca de cacao, a Yemayá con melaza, a Eleggua con corajo, y así sucesivamente al resto de los Orishas utilizando los ingredientes correspondientes.

Rituales y ceremonias religiosas

Igdobun, altar santero en Cuba.

La santería no tiene un credo central para sus prácticas religiosas; aunque se entiende en términos de sus rituales y ceremonias.[195] Estos rituales y ceremonias tienen lugar en lo que se conoce como casa-templo o casa de santos, también conocida como ilé. Los sacerdotes realizan las ceremonias en sus propias casas, porque la santería

carece de templos. Los sacerdotes y las sacerdotisas construyen los santuarios ilé a cada orichá, creando un espacio para el culto llamado igbodun, el altar.[195] En el igbodun se muestran tres tronos distintos (cubiertos con azul regio, blanco y rojo satinados) que representan los asientos de las reinas, los reyes y los guerreros deificados.[197]

Cada ilé está compuesto por aquellos que ocasionalmente buscan la guía de los orishas así como aquellos que están en proceso de convertirse en sacerdotes.[198]

Los numerosos cabildos y casas de santos que surgieron en los siglos XIX y XX son considerados ahora como los lugares donde se originaron y preservaron la cultura y religión cubana Lucumí.[198]

Para pertenecer a la santería los creyentes deben pasar primero por una serie de rituales que llevan un orden en específico que debe respetarse. Uno de los sacramentos o rituales para entrar es el Kari osha, es decir, «hacerse santo». Un santero ya puede practicar la santería y darle continuidad iniciando a más personas, esto siempre y cuando no le sea prohibido por su ángel de la guarda.

La santería es una religión orientada a la práctica; la corrección ritual se considera más importante que la creencia.[199] Tiene un elaborado sistema de rituales,[200] y sus ritos denominados ceremonias.[201] La mayoría de sus actividades giran en torno a los orisha[168] y se centran en la resolución de los problemas de la vida cotidiana.[176] Los practicantes suelen utilizar el término «trabajo» para referirse a la actividad ritual.[202]

La santería es una religión iniciática,[203] organizada en torno a una jerarquía estructurada.[204] Un ethos de secretismo impregna muchas de sus prácticas,[205] y los iniciados suelen negarse a hablar de ciertos temas con los no iniciados.[206] Por esta razón, Mason describe la santería como una sociedad secreta.[82] Para los rituales, se suele utilizar la lengua lucumí.[207] A veces se denomina la lengua de los orichas[208] y se considera un lenguaje divino a través del cual los practicantes pueden contactar con las deidades.[209] Aunque algunos practicantes se sienten incómodos utilizándolo,[210] la mayoría de los iniciados conocen decenas o cientos de palabras y frases del lucumí.[208] La mayoría de los cubanos no entienden la lengua lucumí, salvo algunas palabras que se han filtrado al español cubano.[211] El lucumí deriva de la lengua yoruba, aunque desde el siglo XIX se ha vuelto «cada vez más fragmentada e ininteligible».[212] Al pasar del yoruba al lucumí, se olvidó la pronunciación yoruba de muchas palabras,[210] y a principios del siglo XXI algunos practicantes han estudiado la lengua yoruba para comprender mejor el significado original de las palabras lucumí.[213]

Casas templo

Baba Raúl Cañizares, un sacerdote cubano tanto de la santería como del palo,

fotografiado con su parafernalia ritual

Los rituales tienen lugar en la casa templo,[214] casa de santos,[215] casa de religión[216] o ilé («casa»).[217] Esta casa suele ser el hogar personal de un santero o santera.[218] Suele tener una sala interior, el igbodu («bosquecillo sagrado del festival»), donde se celebran los rituales más importantes.[219] También hay una eyá aránla o sala, a menudo una sala de estar, donde se pueden realizar ritos semiprivados.[219] Otro espacio, el iban balo, o patio, se utiliza para ocasiones públicas, así como para el cultivo de plantas y el alojamiento de los animales que serán sacrificados.[219] La casa suele incluir un lugar donde se guarda la parafernalia ritual, instalaciones de cocina y espacios para que los visitantes duerman.[218]

La casa no sólo se refiere al edificio donde se celebran las ceremonias, sino también a la comunidad de practicantes que se reúnen allí.[218] En este sentido, muchas casas tienen un linaje que se remonta al siglo XIX, y algunos santeros y santeras pueden nombrar a todos los practicantes que se han iniciado en ella.[218] En algunas ceremonias, se recitan los nombres de estos individuos, considerados como ancestros de la casa, en orden cronológico.[220] Aunque miembros de distintas casas suelen interactuar, cada una de ellas es en gran medida autónoma, lo que permite que haya variedad en sus prácticas.[221] En Cuba, es habitual que los practicantes de la santería se reúnan con regularidad[222] y se consideren como una familia:[223] la familia de santo.[224] Por el contrario, en una zona como Veracruz (México), muchos practicantes asisten a rituales grupales y luego se marchan, a veces sin volver a ver a sus copracicantes.[222]

La mayoría de las casas son establecidas por un santero o santera que ha atraído seguidores.[225] Un aprendiz es conocido como su ahijado o ahijada.[226] Se refieren a su santero/santera como padrino o madrina.[227] La relación entre los santeros/santeras y sus «ahijados» es fundamental para la organización social de la religión,[225] y los practicantes creen que cuantos más «ahijados» tenga una santera o santero, mayor será su aché.[166] Se espera que los «ahijados» contribuyan tanto con su trabajo como con sus finanzas a los actos que se celebran en la casa y, a cambio, el santero/santera les brinda asistencia para sus necesidades.[225] Dentro de la religión, ofender al padrino o madrina se considera también una ofensa al oricha que «gobierna la cabeza».[145] Los practicantes expresan su respeto tanto a su padrino o madrina como al orisha mediante una postración ritual, el moforibale, en la que inclinan la cabeza hacia el suelo.[228] La forma precisa del moforibale difiere según si el orisha personal del individuo es masculino o femenino.[229]

Altars

Una sopera con otanes que representan al orisha Yemaya, que se asocia con el mar; los altares de Yemaya suelen tener conchas marinas y parafernalia náutica.[230] Altares o santuarios para los oricha suelen encontrarse tanto en el igbodu[231] como en los hogares de los practicantes.[232] En estos altares hay objetos sagrados, denominados fundamentos,[233] que se guardan en recipientes de porcelana, a

menudo soperas.[234] Los fundamentos más importantes son las piedras denominadas otanes (sing. otán),[234] que se consideran la representación literal y simbólica de los orisha[235] y, por tanto, entidades vivas.[236] Se considera que son fuentes de aché,[237] y que los otanes más antiguos tienen más aché que los más jóvenes.[238]

Los practicantes recogen piedras del paisaje y luego utilizan la adivinación para determinar cuáles contienen un orisha y, de ser así, de qué orisha se trata.[239] A veces, algunos otanes presentan rasgos que los vinculan a un orisha concreto; por ejemplo, las piedras del océano se relacionan con Yemaya, los guijarros de río con Ochún y los fragmentos de meteorito con Changó.[91] Se considera que cada orisha prefiere un color y un número determinado de otanes en la sopera que se le dedica; Changó tiene seis o diez piedras negras, Obatala tiene ocho piedras blancas, mientras que Ochún prefiere cinco piedras amarillas.[240] Los nuevos otanes se someten a un rito de bautismo[237] en el que se les lava con osain (una mezcla de hierbas y agua), y se les «alimenta» con sangre de animales.[238] Cuando un iniciado recibe sus piedras, jura protegerlas y alimentarlas al menos una vez al año.[237]

Una bóveda, o mesa blanca, dispuesta para los espíritus de los muertos, en una casa de Trinidad, Cuba

Otro tipo de material que se coloca dentro de la sopera son las conchas de cauri; normalmente se añaden 18, aunque el número exacto varía en función del orisha a la que esté dedicada la sopera.[238] La sopera suele estar cubierta por una tela (el pañuelo) que se colorea de acuerdo con el orisha en cuestión.[241] Sobre la sopera se colocan a menudo collares, que también representan un orisha en particular. En el altar, las soperas van dispuestas en una jerarquía descendente dependiendo de a qué orisha esté dedicada cada una, con la de Obatala en la cima.[242]

Muchos altares contienen pocas o ninguna representación antropomórfica de los orisha,[243] aunque a menudo incluyen objetos asociados a ellos:[232] un hacha de madera para Changó o un abanico para Ochún, por ejemplo.[241] La creación de estos altares se considera costosa y requiere mucho tiempo.[241] Los materiales pueden seleccionarse en función de los gustos del creyente; los antropólogos han observado a practicantes que han incluido en sus altares figuritas taoístas[244] o estatuas de magos.[245] A menudo se colocan alimentos y flores en el altar como ofrendas.[246] Aunque rara vez se incluyen en sus altares, los practicantes suelen tener estatuas de santos católicos en otros lugares de sus casas.[245]

Además de su altar a los orisha, muchos practicantes tienen altares reservados para los espíritus de los muertos.[247] Suelen consistir en una mesa cubierta de blanco conocida como bóveda,[248] derivada en parte de la Mesa Blanca del Espiritismo.[249] Las bóvedas suelen tener fotografías de familiares fallecidos, a los que se les hacen ofrendas:[250] ofrendas populares para los espíritus de los muertos incluyen siete vasos de agua,[157] un cafecito[251] y el aguardiente.[252] Muchos practicantes también consagran a sus antepasados familiares bajo el lavabo del baño. Este lugar se

elige para que los antepasados puedan viajar entre los reinos de los vivos y los muertos a través del agua de las tuberías.[249]

Ofrendas y sacrificio de animales

Sacrificio de una gallina en un ritual de santería en 2017 en La Habana

Las ofrendas se denominan ebbó[253](o ebó),[254] y se ofrecen a los orisha, a espíritus ancestrales, al propio ori de la persona, y a veces a la tierra.[255] Estas ofrendas pueden consistir en fruta y otros alimentos, licor, flores, velas, dinero o animales sacrificados.[256] A menudo se recurre a la adivinación para determinar la naturaleza exacta de la ofrenda;[257] se supone que los iniciados deben realizar ofrendas con regularidad, y al menos una vez al año.[258] Ofrecidas para fortalecer a las fuerzas sobrenaturales, como agradecimiento o como súplica,[259] ayudan a formar una relación recíproca con estas entidades con la esperanza de recibir algo a cambio.[260] Si esto no se materializa, los practicantes pueden recurrir a varias explicaciones: que los detalles del ritual eran incorrectos, que el sacerdote o la sacerdotisa que realizó el rito carecía de suficiente aché, o que se ofreció el ébbo equivocado para la situación.[261]

Llevado a cabo por un matador,[262] el sacrificio de animales se denomina matanza.[263] Normalmente lo lleva a cabo un hombre,[264] y se prohíbe la participación de las mujeres que están menstruando.[166] Aves—incluyendo pintadas, pollos y palomas—suelen sacrificarse degolladas o con la cabeza retorcida y arrancada.[265] En rituales de mayor importancia, los sacrificios suelen ser de animales de cuatro patas.[108] Algunos practicantes describen la matanza de animales como un sustituto aceptable de los sacrificios humanos.[266] Se cree que los orisha y los espíritus «comen» la sangre de la víctima;[267] se considera que la fuerza vital de ésta se transfiere al orisha, reforzando así su aché.[268] A veces se entiende que un animal que lucha por evitar que lo maten tiene una fuerza especial que luego pasará al orisha.[268]

Una vez sacrificados, las cabezas cortadas de los animales pueden colocarse encima de la sopera perteneciente al orisha al que se ha dirigido el sacrificio.[269] Una vez descuartizado el cadáver, algunos de los órganos—conocidos como acheses—pueden cocinarse y ofrecerse al orisha;[270] otras partes serán consumidas por los practicantes.[271] Parte de la sangre puede recogerse y añadirse al omiero, una infusión de hierbas y agua.[262] Este líquido, que se cree que contiene mucho aché,[272] se utiliza para eliminar influencias malévolas y en ceremonias para bautizar herramientas rituales.[262] El sacrificio de animales en la santería ha sido motivo de preocupación para muchos no practicantes,[273] y a veces ha llevado a los adeptos a enfrentarse con la ley.[274] En el caso de 1993 de la iglesia del Lukumi Babalu Aye contra la ciudad de Hialeah, el Tribunal Supremo de EE. UU. dictaminó que las leyes sobre crueldad animal dirigidas específicamente a la santería eran inconstitucionales.[275]

Hacerse santo

Los «iyabó» adoptan un nombre como santero y deben vestir de blanco durante ese primer año de purificación.

En la concepción santera, hacerse santo quiere decir asentarse su ángel de la guarda en su cabeza, es decir, tener a tu Orisha tutelar contigo ad eternum y la responsabilidad y compromiso que ello requiere. Se determina el Orisha tutelar previamente a hacerse santo, pues la ceremonia varía en función del Orisha que se va a coronar. A la persona que se le hace santo se le llama «iyawó» (también iyabó o yabó), título que recibirá solo por ese año en el cual debe con rigurosas y estrictas reglas y tras finalizar ese año de purificación ya se le llama santero u olorisha.

Para convertirse en santero o santera, el iniciador debe pasar por un proceso de iniciación intensivo[197] en el que la enseñanza de las habilidades rituales y el comportamiento moral se produce de manera informal y no verbal. La ceremonia del kari osha tiene una duración de 7 días en los cuales se renace, se reciben los orishas, se obtiene itá de santo y nombre de santo (nombre que identifica al santero dentro de la religión). Esa ceremonia la dirige el «Obá Ení Oriaté» que es un santero de amplios conocimientos y experiencia que lo hizo merecedor de ese títulos, aparte de los padrinos y otros santeros a los cuales se les asignan distintas tareas que permiten el oportuno desarrollo de la ceremonia. Para empezar, el iniciador pasa por lo que se llama un ritual de limpieza. El padrino del iniciador limpia la cabeza con determinadas hierbas y agua. Se debe escoger padrino («babaloshá») o madrina («iyaloshá»), ya que simbólicamente se nace de ellos y son quienes junto a la «oyugbona» guían el camino religioso del iniciado. El Padrino frota las hierbas y el agua en un patrón específico de movimientos en el cabello. Sin embargo, si una persona está ingresando a la Santería por la necesidad de curación, se someterá a la rogación de la cabeza (bendición de la cabeza), en la cual se aplica agua de coco y algodón en la cabeza.[276] Una vez limpiado, hay cuatro rituales de iniciación principales que el iniciador tendrá que realizar: obtener los elekes (collar de cuentas), recibir a Los Guerreros (Oddé, los orishas guerreros), hacer Ocha (Santo) y Asiento (ascender al trono).[195]

Ritual de obtención de los elekes

Mujer portando varios elekes (collares de cuentas).

El primer ritual se conoce como la adquisición de los collares de cuentas (conocidos como elekes); de acuerdo con de La Torre "los colores y patrones de las cuentas en los elekes serán los de la orichá que sirve como cabeza de la iyawo (novia) y ángel de la guarda, por lo que lo primero que debe hacerse es determinar quién es el orichá es. El collar de elekes se baña con una mezcla de hierbas, sangre de sacrificio y otras sustancias potentes y se administra a los iniciados.[195]

El iniciado más a menudo recibe el collar de las cinco oricha más poderosas y populares, ya que las cuentas multicolores de los elekes están modeladas para los Orishás primarios (Eleguá, Obatalá, Yemayá, Changó y Ochún), y sirven como un punto sagrado de contacto con estos orishás. Cuando se recibe el collar, el iniciado debe

inclinarse sobre una bañera y lavarse la cabeza con el olo orichá. Los elekes[276] son como estandartes sagrados para los Orishás y actúan como un signo de la presencia y protección del Orichá. Los elekes no se deben vestir durante el período de menstruación, ni durante el sexo ni al bañarse.[195]

Ritual de Medio Asiento

El segundo ritual importante es conocido como medio asiento, la creación de una imagen de la orichá Eleguá. El individuo pasará por una consulta con un santero, donde se revisará la vida, el pasado, el presente y el futuro de todos los destinatarios. Durante la consulta, el Santero determina qué camino de Eleguá recibirá el destinatario. Luego, basándose en sus hallazgos, elige los materiales que se utilizarán para construir la imagen de la Eleguá, una escultura que se utiliza para mantener a los espíritus malignos lejos de la casa del iniciador. Este ritual solo lo preparan los hombres cuando los orichás toman algo del espíritu "masculino" del Santero en el proceso.[277]

Ritual de recibimiento de los guerreros

El tercer ritual, conocido como recibir a los guerreros, es un ritual donde los iniciados reciben objetos de su padrino que representa a los guerreros; Herramientas de hierro para representar a Ogún; un arco de hierro y una flecha para representar a Ochosi; y un cáliz de hierro o plata coronado por un gallo para representar a Osun.[195] Este ritual comienza una relación formal y de por vida que el iniciado tendrá con estos Orichás, ya que los orichás dedican sus energías a proteger y proveer al iniciado en su camino.

Ritual de ascensión al trono

El último ritual del proceso de iniciación se conoce como asiento o ascender al trono, y es el ritual más importante y secreto de la santería, ya que es la ceremonia donde el o la iyawó renace. Este ritual es la culminación de los rituales anteriores y no se puede realizar a menos que los otros se hayan completado. El Asiento es un proceso de purificación y adivinación por el cual el iniciado se vuelve como un bebé recién nacido y comienza una nueva vida de crecimiento más profundo dentro de la fe.[195]

Los santeros, u «omorishas» son los que entran en contacto con la deidad, por ejemplo, a través de consultas con caracol o consulta espiritual, en sesiones espirituales según el desarrollo de cada persona.

El «oriaté» es la persona que dirige las ceremonias de la divinidad (orisha, santo) para que esta se haga de manera correcta y en ella solo trabajan santeros que estén consagrados; al nuevo iniciado y recién consagrado se le llama iyawo el cual ya ha pasado por rituales secretos.

Los «aleynos» son aquellas personas que tienen ciertos conocimientos, son creyentes, están interesados en las ceremonias así que tengan algunos secretos, los rituales no se deben exponer ante las personas no consagradas.

Bembé o Toque de Santos

Artículo principal: Bembé

Bembé en Mantilla, al sur de La Habana.

Bembé en Mantilla, al sur de La Habana.

El bembé, o también toque de Santos,[278] es una fiesta religiosa en la que se canta y baila en honor a los Orishas. Se les alaba y se les implora a unirse a la fiesta. Se trata de una de las ceremonias más notables de la santería. Es esencial la presencia de instrumentos de percusión, como tambores batá, tumbadoras o tabales,[278] pues no se puede celebrar la ceremonia sin ritmos. Cada Orisha tiene un ritmo asociado, cosa que los tamborileros deben dominar para poder tocar conjuntamente. Tanto en la religión yoruba como en la santería el tambor es un objeto sagrado y la música se considera una dimensión mística para entrar en contacto con los Orisha. De hecho, el canto y baile en el bembé se consideran oraciones a los dioses.

Actualmente en muchos lugares de Cuba se celebran bembés en espacios públicos de pueblos y ciudades y están abiertos a que se una quien quiera. Por ejemplo, en Santiago de Cuba se celebra en octubre el Bembé general, el cual se considera una forma de limpieza espiritual colectiva.[279]

A veces el bembé acaba en un ritual de posesión o trance, por el cual una deidad Orisha se manifiesta en el bembé a través de un sacerdote santero. En principio, sólo los sacerdotes pueden ser poseídos, y sólo al Orisha al que se han consagrado. La posesión de un Orisha es motivo de gran alegría entre los participantes del bembé.

Danza a Ogún.

Danza a Obatalá.

Danza a Yemayá.

Danza a Oshún.

Ceremonia de Ebbó

Véase también: Sacrificio animal

Consiste en el sacrificio de animales. La función de este ritual es la de resolver problemas de índole económica, problemas de salud o de estabilidad espiritual. En la santería, el sacrificio de animales está determinado por el rito de la adivinación, es decir, cada sacrificio responde a la solicitud, a través de los métodos de adivinación, de algún orishá o ancestro que requiere de uno o varios animales para poder resolver la situación que la persona consultada quiera solucionar.

En este sentido, el sacrificio no es un instrumento mediante el cual se pretenda redimir pecado alguno ya que en la santería no existe tal concepto. En la santería ni el hombre ni la mujer son concebidos como depositarios a priori de una o más culpas. El sacrificio, según la cosmovisión santera, es la vía mediante la cual puede ser restaurado un proceso o un ritmo que haya sido interrumpido. Los santeros aluden a que cada quien nace con un ritmo específico, un ritmo espiritual en la vida, que no debe ser interrumpido ya que si es así, entonces la persona no podrá realizarse plenamente. Sin

embargo, cuando este ritmo ha sido trastocado, por las razones que hayan sido, entonces se requiere del sacrificio de un animal para restaurarlo. La sangre del animal, ofrecida a algún orishá o ancestro, es capaz de restaurar dicho ritmo porque ella está ligada directamente a un ritmo en el cuerpo del animal.

Este ritual ha sido criticado por los medios de comunicación occidentales.

También es muy común el uso de ofrendas que pueden variar entre comidas, frutas, flores dependiendo del Orisha que se esté agasajando.

En la cultura popular

Santeros en La Habana Vieja. La danza y la música son dos expresiones artísticas fundamentales en la cultura yoruba y en la santería. Los ritmos africanos marcaron para siempre la música de Cuba en géneros como el bolero, el son, la salsa, el guaguancó, la rumba o el jazz latino.

En la cultura popular cubana se pueden encontrar muchísimas referencias a la santería. La expresión «tener aché» en Cuba significa «tener suerte».[172] Al poder o energía de Olodumare se le conoce como aché, o ashé en yoruba. También está el dicho cubano «hacerse santo», que hace referencia a los Yawós (o «yabós»), los que se bautizan en la santería. Son fácilmente reconocibles porque durante su formación deben seguir un proceso riguroso de consagración para convertirse en santeros. Por ejemplo, vistiendo de blanco, alcanzar el máximo vínculo con su ángel de la guarda, el santo que los protege.[280]

Música

Celia Cruz, junto con La Sonora Matancera, homenajeó a lo largo de su discografía la cultura santera, con canciones como «Burundanga» (1953), «Plegaria a Laroyé» (1954) o «Yemayá» (1962) entre muchísimas más, culminando en el álbum recopilatorio Tributo a los Orishas de 1999. También el percusionista estadounidense de origen puertorriqueño Ray Barretto se consideraba «El hijo de Obatalá» (1973). También Celina y Reutilio, Merceditas Valdés, Candita Batista o Caridad Cuervo cantaron profusamente a Yemayá y a los demás orishas.

Quizá uno de los santos más populares entre los cubanos es Changó, el dios del trueno.[9] Tiene una especial importancia en la cultura musical puesto porque el objeto mitológico asociado a Changó son los tambores Batá.

Orishas en Varsovia (Polonia) en 2009

En 1999, Roldán González, Ruzzo Medina, Yotuel Romero y Livián Núñez (Flaco-Pro) se unieron para crear uno de los grupos de música más emblemáticos de la historia reciente de Cuba, los Orishas. De género hip hop latino, en sus canciones hay numerosas referencias a la tradición santera-yoruba.

También se hace referencia a la santería en la canción "Santería" en el álbum Sublime de la banda estadounidense del mismo nombre.

Véase también

Las 21 divisiones

Las Siete Potencias

San La Muerte y Santa Muerte

Candomblé, religión afroamericana en Brasil

Culto a los Egúngún, culto yoruba a los antepasados

Umbanda, religión afroamericana en Brasil

Religiones afroamericanas

Religiones tradicionales africanas

Santerismo, espiritismo derivado de la santería

Santo popular

Idioma Osha-Ifa

Notas

«La santería no está en consonancia con los cultos de la Iglesia católica. La razón principal es porque la santería tiene una cantidad de dioses, es decir, es politeísta (...) Ya desde sus bases la santería está en oposición a los principios del catolicismo (...) En la sagrada escritura [católica] tenemos en el libro del Deuteronomio 18:9[6] especifica que Nuestro Señor va en contra de esto.» - Padre Óscar Vélez, párroco de la Iglesia de Palo Verde (México)[7]

De origen dahomey (Benín) donde se le conoce como Azowano. En Cuba se le conoce también como Azojuano.

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A divination tray on which cowrie shells rests, as are used for Ifá divination
Ifá or Fá is a geomantic system originating from Yorubaland in West Africa. It originates within the traditional religion of the Yoruba people. It is also practiced by followers of West African Vodun and certain African diasporic religions such as Cuban Santería.

According to Ifá teaching, the divinatory system is overseen by an orisha spirit, Orunmila, who is believed to have given it to humanity. Ifá is organised as an initiatory tradition, with an initiate called a babaláwo or bokónṣ. Traditionally, these are all-male, although women have been initiated in Cuba and Mexico. Its oracular literary body is made up of 256 volumes (signs) that are divided into two categories, the first called Ojú Odù or main Odù that consists of 16 chapters. The second category is composed of 240 chapters called Amúlù Odù (omoluos), these are composed through the combination of the main Odù. They use either the divining chain known as Ọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀, or the sacred palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) or kola nuts called Ikin, on the wooden divination tray called Ọ̀pọ̀n Ifá to mathematically calculate which Odu to use for what problem.

Ifá is first recorded among the Yoruba people of West Africa. The expansion of Yoruba influence over neighbouring peoples resulted in the spread of Ifá, for instance to Fon people practising West African Vodun. As a result of the Atlantic slave trade, enslaved initiates of Ifá were transported to the Americas. There, Ifá survived in Cuba, where it developed an overlap with Afro-Cuban religious traditions such as Santería and Abakuá. Growing transnational links between Africa and the Americas during the 1970s also saw attempts by West African babalawos to train and initiate people in countries like Brazil and the United States.

Definitions

According to traditional lore, Ifá began in the city of Ile-Ife in Yorubaland.[1] Since that point, its practice has spread throughout lower Nigeria and westward into coastal Benin and Togo and then in Ghana.[1] It has also been taken to the Americas, where it is practiced within some African diasporic religions.[1]

The term Ifá is the Yoruba language name for the practice. In the Fon language it is called Fá, and among the Ewe and Mina languages it is Afa.[1] The Yoruba system of Ifá is deemed more time consuming, and requires more sacrifices, than the Fá system among the Fon.[2] In the Fon-dominated Ouidah, therefore, some people think of Yoruba Ifá as being more potent than their own local system.[3] Some people who have been initiated into Fon-style Fá thus later go through additional ceremonies to be initiated into Yoruba-style Ifá.[4]

Belief

Sixteen Principal Odu

Name	1	2	3	4
Ogbè	I	I	I	I
Ọyèkú	II	II	II	II
Ìwòrì	II	I	I	II
Òdí	I	II	II	I
Ìrosùn	I	I	II	II
Ọwọ̀nrín	II	II	II	I
Ọbàrà	I	II	II	II
Ọkànràn	II	II	II	I
Ọgúndá	I	I	I	II
Ọṣá	II	I	I	I
Ìká	II	I	II	II
Òtúúrúpọ̀n	II	II	I	II
Òtúrá	I	II	I	I
Ìrètẹ̀	I	I	II	I
Ọṣẹ̀	I	II	I	II
Ọfún (Ọràngún)		II	I	II

Sixteen Principal Afa-du (Yeveh Vodou)

Name	1	2	3	4
Eji-Ogbe	I	I	I	I
Ọyeku-Meji	II	II	II	II
Iwori-Meji	II	I	I	II
Odi-Meji	I	II	II	I
Irosun-Meji	I	I	II	II
Ọwanrin-Meji	II	II	I	I
Ọbara-Meji	I	II	II	II
Ọkanran-Meji	II	II	II	I
Ogunda-Meji	I	I	I	II
Ọsa-Meji	II	I	I	I
Ika-Meji	II	I	II	II
Oturupon-Meji		II	II	I
Otura-Meji	I	II	I	I
Irete-Maji	I	I	II	I
Ọse-Meji	I	II	I	II
Ofun meji	II	I	II	I

Theology

In Yorubaland, divination gives priests unreserved access to the teachings of Ọrúnmìlà.

[5] Among the Fon, Ọrúnmìlà is known as Fá.[6] In the Fon language, fa literally means

"coolness" and evokes the concepts of mildness, softness, peacefulness, and

equilibrium.[7] This is deemed appropriate because the tutelary practice of the divination

system, Fá, is thought to promote coolness and to dislike hot things.[7] Among the

Yoruba, this concept of coolness is also important, but is referred to as tutu, a term

bearing no linguistic associations with Ifá.[7]

In the West African religions that incorporate Ifá divination, the spirit-deity known among Yoruba people as Eshu-Elegba, Eshu, or Elegbara, is deemed the intermediate communicator relaying Ifá's will both to humanity and to other spirit-deities.[8] Among the Fon, Eshu is termed Legba, and among the Ewe and Mina, he is Elegy.[8] Ifá divination rites provide an avenue of communication to the spiritual realm and the intent of one's destiny.[9]

Among the Fon, it is the female spirit Gbădu who is regarded as the source of Fá's power.[10] She is deemed to be the wife of Fá.[11] Her presence is required for new initiations.[12] She is believed to offer significant protection for people but her veneration is thought dangerous unless a person is initiated.[12] It is for instance believed that women must be kept apart from her presence, for if they get near her they may be struck barren or die.[11]

System

Odù Ifá

Ifá consists of 256 binary signs.[13] The Yoruba term odù instead appears in Fon as a dù.[2]

In Fon, the sacred palm nuts are called fádékwín.[14] A "divining chain" is referred to in Yoruba as a òpèlè and in Fon as an akplé.[2] It may comprise eight halves of a nut, tied together.[15] The way in which it falls then reveals one of 256 possible signs.[15]

To perform the divination, the babalawo will often be seated on a mat.[16] Before casting the divining chain the diviner may sing to call forth Fá.[15] In Fon, the divining tray is called a fáté.[17] In West Africa, the quality of the fáté may indicate the babalawo's financial success; some who have a small client base may use only a plastic or cardboard tray, while those with access to greater funds may pay for an elaborate, purpose built wooden fáté.[18]

Another ritual object is known to the Yoruba as Qpá Qşun and to the Fon as a fásen.[19] This consists of a metal staff, four to five feet tall, that is capped at the top with a metal disk and sometimes a metal rooster.[20] When a fásen is created, it is washed in specific leaves and the blood of 16 giant snails; this task is performed by women, secluded from the view of men.[21] Any chickens sacrificed to the fásen are only eaten by women.[21]

There are sixteen major books in the Odu Ifá literary corpus. When combined, there are a total of 256 Odu (a collection of sixteen, each of which has sixteen alternatives ⇔ 162, or 44) that are believed to reference all situations, circumstances, actions and consequences in life based on the uncountable ese (or "poetic tutorials") relative to the 256 Odu coding. These form the basis of traditional Yoruba spiritual knowledge and are the foundation of all Yoruba divination systems. Ifá proverbs, stories, and poetry are not written down. Rather, they are passed down orally from one babalawo to another.

Yoruba people consult Ifá for divine intervention and spiritual guidance.[22]

Among the Yoruba, divination trays are usually circular although can be quadrangular; conversely, this latter shape is most common among those trays used by Fon speakers.
[23]

The Messenger sign of Ifá

Ceremonial offerings in Ifá

In addition to the sixteen fundamental signs, Ifá divination includes a major sign, which is the combination of Ọse and Otura, from right to left (Ọse-Tura).

Ọse-Tura

I	I
II	II
I	I
I	II

That sign must be written each time a ritual is performed: Ọse-Tura is the messenger and the carrier of the sacrifice. It is closely associated with the god Èṣù in the system of Ifá. That Messenger sign was known in Arab and Latin medieval geomancy as the Morning Star.[24]

Babalawos

A babalawo photographed in West Africa

An initiate of Ifá is called a babaláwo in Yoruba and a bokɔnɔ in Fon.[25]

Traditionally only heterosexual men are allowed to become babalawos,[26] with women and homosexual males being excluded.[27] Some gay men have nevertheless been initiated;[28] in both Cuba and the United States, for example, several babalawos have initiated their openly gay sons.[29] Moreover, despite the traditional prohibition on women taking on this role,[30] the scholar of religion Mary Ann Clark noted that by the early 21st century, female practitioners were "becoming institutionalized in some religious communities" in the United States, where they were known as either iyalawo (mother of secrets) or iyanifá (mother of Ifá).[31] Female practitioners have also been reported in Mexico.[32]

Four babalawos photographed in 2021

The restriction on female initiation is explained through the story that the òrìṣà Orula was furious that Yemayá, his wife, had used his tabla divining board and subsequently decided to ban women from ever touching it again.[33] Among the Fon, one tradition maintains that women do not need to be initiated into the traditions of the female spirit Gbădu—who is Fá's wife—because they already have the power of creation within them.[11] According to Fon diviners, keeping women and Gbădu apart ensures a

conceptual state of coolness.[11] This extends to a taboo on women eating any of the meat from animals sacrificed to Gbădu.[10]

Once an individual is initiated as a babalawo they are given a pot containing various items, including palm nuts, which is believed to be the literal embodiment of Orula.[34] Babalawos provide offerings to Orula, including animal sacrifices and gifts of money.[35] In Cuba, Ifá typically involves the casting of consecrated palm nuts to answer a question. The babalawo then interprets the message of the nuts depending on how they have fallen; there are 256 possible configurations in the Ifá system, which the babalawo is expected to have memorised.[36] Individuals approach the babalawo seeking guidance, often on financial matters, at which the diviner will consult Orula through the established divinatory method.[37] In turn, those visiting the babalawos pay them for their services.[38]

Initiation

Initiation as a babalawo requires a payment to the initiator and is typically regarded as highly expensive.[39] In Benin, Fá initiation usually takes less than a week, whereas initiations into the cults of other vodún may take several weeks or months.[40] A distinction is made between an initiation that called yĩ Fá ("to receive Fá"), which is often seen as a "first initiation" into Fá's veneration, which offers his protection, and the priestly initiation, at which a person is said to Fázùnyí ("receive Fá's forest").[41]

Among the Fon, the sacred forest of Fá is called fázùn;[15] this is differentiated from ordinary forest by shredded palm fronds, known in Fon as asàn and in Yoruba as màriwò.[20] It will be here that new initiates are led; they will be accompanied with animals for sacrifice, by existing initiates singing praise songs, and by a person leading the way carrying a fásen.[19] A figurine of the spirit Lẹgbá may be brought along for the ritual, invoking this deity to guard the initiates' passage into the forest. Offerings will be given to him, and divination employed to check that he accepts them.[20]

In the forest, the new initiate will be given a kola nut to eat, to bring him in communion with Fá.[42] All present may then place their hands together on the fásen, to which a rooster may then be sacrificed.[43] The newcomer's eyes will be washed in a herbal mixture called Gbădùsin.[44] The neophyte will then be blindfolded and then led into the sacred grove of the fázùn, where the secret teachings of Fá are revealed to them.[17] Divination will be used to determine under which of the 256 signs their priesthood will be born. The selected sign indicates to which spirits they should pay particular attention and to which taboos they must observe.[25] This may involve avoiding eating certain foods, wearing certain colors, or engaging in specific actions.[45] The initiate's head will then be shaved as a symbol of their initiation and they will be ritually bathed and wrapped in white cloth.[46] A celebration follows, in which a goat may be sacrificed to Fá and the participants eat its meat.[46]

The initiate may receive a small bundle, the kpòli, containing secret ingredients corresponding to their personal du.[47] They may also receive a small vessel to house

their palm nuts and a small stone, the ken, to protect them from witchcraft.[47]

History

West African origins

The 16-principle system has its earliest history in West Africa. Each Niger–Congo-speaking ethnic group which practices it has their own myth of origin; Yoruba religion suggests that it was founded by Orunmila in Ilé-Iṣẹ̀ when he initiated himself and then he initiated his students, Akoda and Aseda. According to the book *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest of Times to the British Protectorate* (1921) by Nigerian historian Samuel Johnson and Obadiah Johnson, it was Arugba, the mother of Onibogi, the 8th Alaafin of Oyo, who introduced Oyo to Ifá in the late 1400s. She initiated the Alado of Ado and conferred on him the right to initiate others. The Alado, in turn, initiated the priests of Oyo and that was how Ifá came to be in the Oyo empire.[48]

Ifá originated among the Yoruba peoples.[4] The linguist Wande Abimbola argued that Ifá probably derived from a simpler divinatory system, diloggun; this contrasts with the belief of some babalawos that diloggun was based on Ifá.[49]

Between circa 1727 and 1823, the kingdom of Dahomey was a vassal state of the Yoruba-dominated Oyo Empire to the east, thus resulting in much religious interchange.[50] In this period, the Fon people of Dahomey adopted Ifá as well as the Orò and Egungun cults from the Yoruba.[50] Ifá was present in Dahomey by the reign of its fifth ruler, Tegbesú, who ruled from c.1732 to 1774, and was well established at the royal palace by the reign of Gezò, which lasted from 1818 to 1858.[51]

According to William Bascom,[52] "an indication of the importance of Ifá to the [Yoruba] religious system as a whole is the fact that the most striking religious syncretisms resulting from European contact are to be found in a church established in Lagos in 1934, the Iṣẹ̀ Ọ̀rúnmìlá Adulawọ̀, which was founded on the premise that the teachings of Ifa constitute the Yoruba Bible." It was also set up in Porto-Novo (Benin) the same year.[53] According to Erwan Dianteill,[54] the Church of Ifá is still active in 2024, in Nigeria and Benin, with around 2000 followers in Lagos, Porto-Novo and Cotonou.

Of the foreigners coming to West Africa for initiation into Vodún, the largest group sought initiation into Fá.[55]

Ifá in Cuba

In Cuba, Ifá came to be used in the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería.[56] There, it is the most complex and prestigious divinatory system used in the religion.[57] The two are closely linked, sharing the same mythology and conception of the universe,[58] with Orula or Ọ̀rúnmìlá having a prominent place within Santería.[59] In Cuba, Ifá nevertheless also retains a separate existence from Santería.[59] Many Cuban babalawos are also santeros, or male initiates of Santería,[60] although it is not uncommon for babalawos to perceive themselves as being superior to santeros.[61] Although the presence of babalawos is not required for Santería ceremonies, they often

attend in their capacity as diviners.[62] Other Cuban babalawos have been initiates of the Abakuá society.[63]

At the time of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, there were an estimated 200 babalawos active on Cuba; by the 1990s, Cuban babalawos were claiming that they numbered tens of thousands on the island.[63] In the 1980s, Cuban babalawos created the organisation Ifá Yesterday, Ifá Today, Ifá Tomorrow, the first Cuban institution to represent the priesthood of an Afro-Cuban religion.[64] Following the Soviet Union's collapse in the 1990s, Cuba's government declared that the island was entering a "Special Period" in which new economic measures would be necessary. As part of this, it selectively supported Afro-Cuban and Santería traditions, partly out of a desire to boost tourism; [65] priests of Santería, Ifá, and Palo all took part in government-sponsored tours for foreigners desiring initiation into such traditions.[66]

Ifá in the United States

Cuban migrants took Ifá to the United States. There, during the 1960s, a small group of babalawos dominated the Santería scene in New York. Their dominance was challenged by new Cuban migrants who arrived between 1965 and 1973 and who, although initiated santeros and santeras, were not babalawos.[67] The ethnomusicologist María Teresa Vélez noted that "two types of ocha house arose: those that still relied on the babalaos and did not question any of their prerogatives, and those that became independent of the babalaos for most of their ritual activities," with these latter houses often being run by women.[68]

In 1978, Ifá ceremonies took place in Miami, Florida, overseen by the Nigerian babalawo Ifayemi Elébùibon Awise of Osogbo. He was assisted in this by two Cuban babalawos, Luis Fernández-Pelón and José-Miguel Gómez, both of whom were Abakuá members. [63] In the 1980s, the Chicago-based Philip and Vassa Newmarket established their Ifa Foundation of North and Latin America. Departing from established tradition, they offered "bloodless" initiations that welcomed those who were unwilling to engage in animal sacrifice.[69] Claims have been made that the first woman initiated into Ifá was the Jewish American Dr. D'Haifa Odufora Ifatogun Ina Arara Agbaye.[70]

Ifá in Brazil

Although surviving in Cuban Santería, Ifá did not remain part of a Brazilian religion that owed much to Yoruba traditions, Candomblé.[71] In Candomblé, dilogun instead forms the primary method of divination employed by its initiates.[72] One of the earliest practitioners of Ifá in Brazil was the French ethnographer Pierre Verger, who had become a babalawo in West Africa and who was also involved in Candomblé.[73]

As a result of growing links between Brazil and Nigeria, in the 1970s various educational efforts to promote understandings of Yoruba culture were established in Brazilian cities. This included the Yoruba Culture Research and Study Centre, founded in 1977 by Fernandes Portugal, and which brought in Nigerian teachers to run a course teaching Ifá.[74] The closing ceremony took place in January 1978, attended by 14 students who

were granted the status of omo (son of) Ifá.[75] One of these pupils, a Candomblé initiate named José Nilton Vianna Reis (Torodê de Ogun), later went on to become a babalawo nine years later, before setting out his own Ifá teaching course in 1984.[76]

Reception

In 2008, UNESCO added Ifá to its list of the "Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity".[4][77]

icon Traditional African religion portal

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Vodou (or Voodoo) is a complex, syncretic religion originating from West African traditions and Catholicism, practiced primarily in Haiti, focused on serving spirits (lwa) for health, guidance, and good fortune through rituals, dance, and prayer, and involves belief in one distant God and many spirits, ancestral veneration, and a deep connection

to nature. It's a living, oral tradition that emphasizes community, balance, and restoring spiritual energy, often misunderstood due to historical misconceptions and negative portrayals.

Core Beliefs & Practices

One God & Many Spirits: A supreme, distant God created the world, communicating through various powerful spirits called lwa, who act as intermediaries, similar to Catholic saints.

Lwa (Spirits): Each lwa governs specific aspects of life (love, money, protection) and forms relationships with devotees, offering help in exchange for service.

Ancestors: Deceased ancestors are active participants in the lives of the living, making ancestor veneration crucial.

Nature & Energy: The natural world is sacred, and life involves maintaining balance and equilibrium through the understanding and flow of energy.

Rituals & Worship: Practices include drumming, singing, dancing, trance possession, offerings, and prayers, often in community settings.

Origins & History

West African Roots: Derived from traditions of the Fon, Ewe, and Yoruba peoples of modern-day Benin and Ghana, with the word "Vodou" meaning "spirit" or "god".

Syncretism: Enslaved Africans blended these beliefs with Roman Catholicism, incorporating Catholic hymns, saints (repurposed as lwa), and rituals into their worship.

Resistance & Resilience: Vodou served as a vital force for identity, resistance, and liberation, playing a significant role in the Haitian Revolution.

Misconceptions vs. Reality

Misconceptions: Often portrayed as dark magic, witchcraft, or primitive superstition, largely due to colonial and anthropological biases.

Reality: A rich, complex, and organized system of healing, philosophy, and community support, focused on fostering harmony between humans, spirits, and nature.

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Aug 25, 2021

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24:52

Haitian voodoo primarily involves serving spirits called lua and a lot of Haitian voodoo practice is blended with Roman Catholicism.

What is Vodou?

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Voodoo is an Afro-Caribbean nature religion with monotheistic beliefs, distant God, and Lwas (saints/spirits) as intermediaries.

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•|• We are a Vodou nation. It is the foundation of our identity, the force that shaped our freedom, and no power can alter or erase what history has already carved in our soul.

#Haiti

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Haitian culture & history enthusiast

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What's your thoughts about this video? By the way, The most dominant religion in Haiti is Christianity, with Catholicism being the largest denomination, though many people

also practice Haitian Vodou, often alongside their Christian faith. Recent estimates sho
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3:32
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KreyolReaction (Epavre) 
TikTok

Voodoo's "Day of the Dead" is known as Fèt Gede in Haiti, an annual festival held around November 1st to honor ancestral spirits. Fèt Gede includes Vodou rituals, such as appeasing the spirits of the dead, known as Gede, and venerating lwa like Baron Samedi. It is a blend of Vodou, Catholicism, music, dance and offerings like flowers, bread, and rum. The festival can include rituals where priests or priestesses may become possessed by Gede spirits, sometimes involving shaking.@
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As dawn breaks on November 1, Haiti awakens to the thunder of drums and the sharp scent of piman-laced clairin rum. #FêteGédé, the nation's raw and raucous #Vodou festival of the dead, officially begins and runs through November 2 in a nationwide ritual that transforms grief into defiance and cemeteries into carnival grounds. Vodouisants gather at cemeteries, bringing offerings of rum, food, and flowers for the spirits.

Often called Haiti's Day of the Dead, #FêteGédé stands apart from its Mexican counterpart with its unfiltered blend of reverence and revelry. At the heart of the celebration are the Gede, a family of loa, Vodou spirits who rule over death, fertility, healing, and biting satire. Leading the charge is #Baron amedi, the top-hatted, cigar-chomping guardian of graveyards clad in a black tailcoat and dark sunglasses, controlling the thin veil between worlds. Beside him stands #PapaGede, revered as the first man to ever die, eternally posted at life's crossroads with
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0:30

The Fowler invited oungan (Vodou priest) and Haitian art specialist Jean-Daniel Lafontant to assemble this altar using works from the museum's collection and it is now on view in our permanent collection gallery. In Vodou, altars give aesthetic form and presence to a single lwa (spirit) or a group of related lwa, creating intersections between the sacred and the everyday. With this altar, Lafontant honors Petwo, a family associated with war and transformation: "Petwo was born out of the chaos and hardship of slavery, and that today we maybe need Petwo's energy because the world is in turmoil." Altar components range from powerful, precious, and singular to common, mass-produced, and perishable all contributing to and generating a sensory expression of divinity. Here, we see bottles typically containing medicine or liquor favored by the lwa, flags, pakète (spirit-charged packets), lamps, sacred rattles, and ritual regalia and offerings to the lwa. They are conduits of reciprocity betw

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OGOU×××× LAFRIK GINEN School of Vodou + Hoodoo Ogous's tendency to subdivide indicates the priotal position he occupies Ogou is a powerful deity in African spirituality, particularly in West African Vodou and Haitian Vodou. Ogou is often associated with war, courage, strength, and protection, and is revered as a powerful protector of the community. During this rites of passage you will learn how to call on the spirit of Ogou , learn his songs , offerings and more ! Lafrik Ginen , This school serves as a 7 Month Rites of Passage For Black, Indigenous People. WITH an OPTIONAL 7 DAY retreat in Jakmel HAITI Bringing forth Vodou + Hoodoo 101 full of basic overstanding of traditions, rituals, hands on practice through ceremony and conjure work. , witness initiation into Haitian Vodou and sing and dance with the LWA!! From the tribes of the Fon, Yoruba, and Oyo including its own Aja people—came to Ayiti with only their bodies and spirits intact. In the creolizing cauldron of
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What is Vodou? – World Religions

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Short answer: A religion of African origins that blended with Catholicism in Saint-Domingue and continues to thrive in Haiti.

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Not to be confused with West African Vodún, Louisiana Voodoo, or Hoodoo (spirituality).

A sequined drapo flag, by Haitian artist Georges Valris, depicting the vèvè symbol of the lwa Loko Atison; these symbols play an important role in Vodou ritual

Haitian Vodou[a] (/ˈvoʊduː/) is an African diasporic religion that developed in Haiti between the 16th and 19th centuries. It arose through a process of syncretism between several traditional religions of West and Central Africa and Catholicism. There is no central authority in control of the religion and much diversity exists among practitioners, who are known as Vodouists, Vodouisants, or Serviteurs.

Vodou teaches the existence of a transcendent creator divinity, Bondye, under whom are spirits known as lwa. Typically deriving their names and attributes from traditional West and Central African deities, they are equated with Catholic saints. The lwa divide into different groups, the nanchon ("nations"), most notably the Rada and the Petwo, about whom various myths and stories are told. This theology has been labelled both monotheistic and polytheistic. An initiatory tradition, Vodouists commonly venerate the lwa at an ounfò (temple), run by an oungan (priest) or manbo (priestess). Alternatively, Vodou is also practised within family groups or in secret societies like the Bizango. A central ritual involves practitioners drumming, singing, and dancing to encourage a lwa to possess one of their members and thus communicate with them. Offerings to the lwa, and to spirits of the dead, include fruit, liquor, and sacrificed animals. Several forms of divination are utilized to decipher messages from the lwa. Healing rituals and the preparation of herbal remedies and talismans also play a prominent role.

Vodou developed among Afro-Haitian communities amid the Atlantic slave trade of the 16th to 19th centuries. Its structure arose from the blending of the traditional religions of those enslaved West and Central Africans brought to the island of Hispaniola, among them Kongo, Fon, and Yoruba. There, it absorbed influences from the culture of the French colonialists who controlled the colony of Saint-Domingue, most notably Roman Catholicism but also Freemasonry. Many Vodouists were involved in the Haitian Revolution of 1791 to 1801 which overthrew the French colonial government, abolished slavery, and transformed Saint-Domingue into the republic of Haiti. The Catholic Church

left for several decades following the Revolution, allowing Vodou to become Haiti's dominant religion. In the 20th century, growing emigration spread Vodou abroad. The late 20th century saw growing links between Vodou and related traditions in West Africa and the Americas, such as Cuban Santería and Brazilian Candomblé, while some practitioners influenced by the Négritude movement have sought to remove Catholic influences.

Most Haitians practice both Vodou and Catholicism, seeing no contradiction in pursuing the two different systems simultaneously. Smaller Vodouist communities exist elsewhere, especially among Haitian diasporas in Cuba and the United States. Both in Haiti and abroad Vodou has spread beyond its Afro-Haitian origins and is practiced by individuals of various ethnicities. Having faced much criticism through its history, Vodou has been described as one of the world's most misunderstood religions.

Definitions and terminology

Vodou paraphernalia for sale at the Marché de Fer (Iron Market) in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Vodou is a religion.[6] More specifically, scholars have characterised it as an Afro-Haitian religion,[7] and as Haiti's "national religion".[8] Its main structure derives from the African traditional religions of West and Central Africa which were brought to Haiti by enslaved Africans between the 16th and 19th centuries.[9] Of these, the greatest influences came from the Fon and Bakongo peoples.[10] On the island, these African religions mixed with the iconography of European-derived traditions such as Catholicism and Freemasonry,[11] taking the form of Vodou around the mid-18th century.[12] In combining varied influences, Vodou has often been described as syncretic,[13] a product of creolization,[14] or alternatively as a "symbiosis".[15]

As formed in Haiti, Vodou represented "a new religion",[16] "a creolized New World system",[17] one that differs in many ways from African traditional religions.[18] The scholar Leslie Desmangles therefore called it an "African-derived tradition",[19] Ina J. Fandrich termed it a "neo-African religion",[20] and Markel Thylefors called it an "Afro-Latin American religion".[21] Several other African diasporic religions found in the Americas formed in a similar way, and owing to their shared origins in West African traditional religion, Vodou has been characterized as a "sister religion" of Cuban Santería and Brazilian Candomblé.[22]

Vodou has no central institutional authority,[23] no single leader,[24] and no developed body of doctrine.[25] It thus has no orthodoxy,[26] no central liturgy,[27] and no formal creed.[28] Developing over the course of several centuries,[29] it has changed over time.[30] It displays variation at both the regional and local level[31]—including variation between Haiti and the Haitian diaspora[32]—as well as among different congregations.[33] It is practiced domestically, by families on their land, but also by congregations meeting communally,[34] with the latter termed "temple Vodou".[35]

In Haitian culture, religions are not generally deemed totally autonomous. Many Haitians

thus practice both Vodou and Roman Catholicism,[36] with Vodouists usually regarding themselves as Roman Catholics.[37] In Haiti, some Vodouists have also practiced Protestantism,[38] Mormonism,[39] or Freemasonry;[40] in Cuba they have involved themselves in Santería,[41] and in the United States with modern Paganism.[42] Vodou has also absorbed elements from other contexts; in Cuba, some Vodouists have adopted elements from Spiritism.[43] Influenced by the Négritude movement, other Vodouists have sought to remove Roman Catholic and other European influences from their practice of Vodou.[44]

Terminology

In English, Vodou's practitioners are termed Vodouists;[45] in French and Haitian Creole, they are called Vodouisants[46] or Vodouyizan.[47] Another term for adherents is sèvitè (serviteurs, "devotees"),[48] reflecting their self-description as people who sèvi lwa ("serve the lwa"), the supernatural beings that play a central role in Vodou.[49]

An oungan (Vodou priest) with another practitioner at a ceremony in Haiti in 2011
Many words used in the religion derive from the Fon language of West Africa;[50] this includes the word Vodou itself.[51] First recorded in the 1658 *Doctrina Christiana*, [52] the Fon word *Vôdoun* was used in the West African kingdom of Dahomey to signify a spirit or deity.[53] In Haitian Creole, Vodou came to designate a specific style of dance and drumming,[54] before outsiders to the religion adopted it as a generic term for much Afro-Haitian religion.[55] The word Vodou now encompasses "a variety of Haiti's African-derived religious traditions and practices", [56] incorporating "a bundle of practices that practitioners themselves do not aggregate". [57] Vodou is thus a term primarily used by scholars and outsiders to the religion; [57] many practitioners describe their belief system with the term *Ginen*, which especially denotes a moral philosophy and ethical code regarding how to live and to serve the spirits.[32]

Vodou is the common spelling for the religion among scholars, in official Haitian Creole orthography, and by the United States Library of Congress.[58] Some scholars prefer the spellings *Vodoun*, *Voudoun*, or *Vodun*, [59] while in French the spellings *vaudou* [60] or *vaudoux* also appear.[61] The spelling *Voodoo*, once common, is now generally avoided by practitioners and scholars when referring to the Haitian religion.[62] This is both to avoid confusion with Louisiana Voodoo, a related but distinct tradition, [63] and to distinguish it from the negative connotations that the term *Voodoo* has in Western popular culture.[64]

Beliefs

Bondye and the lwa

A selection of ritual items used in Vodou practice on display in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.

Vodou is monotheistic,[65] teaching the existence of a single supreme God.[66] This entity is called *Bondye* or *Bonîé*, [67] a name deriving from the French term *Bon Dieu*

("Good God").[68] Another term for this God—borrowed from Freemasonry[40]—is the Gran Mèt.[69] For Vodouists, Bondye is the ultimate source of power,[70] the creator of the universe,[71] and the maintainer of cosmic order.[72] Haitians frequently use the phrase si Bondye vle ("if Bondye wishes"), suggesting a belief that all things occur in accordance with this divinity's will.[73] Vodouists regard Bondye as being transcendent and remote;[74] as the God is uninvolved in human affairs,[75] they see little point in approaching it directly.[76] While Vodouists often equate Bondye with the Christian God, [77] Vodou does not incorporate belief in a powerful antagonist that opposes the supreme being akin to the Christian notion of Satan.[78]

Vodou has also been characterized as polytheistic.[76] It teaches the existence of beings called the lwa,[79] a term varyingly translated into English as "spirits", "gods", or "geniuses".[80] These lwa are also known as the mystères, anges, saints, and les invisibles,[48] and are sometimes equated with the angels of Christian cosmology.[77] Vodou teaches that there are over a thousand lwa.[81] Serving as Bondye's intermediaries,[82] they communicate with humans through their dreams or by directly possessing them.[83] Vodouists believe the lwa are capable of offering people help, protection, and counsel in return for ritual service.[84] Each lwa has its own personality, [48] and is associated with specific colors,[85] days of the week,[86] and objects.[48] Particular lwa are also associated with specific human family lineages.[87] These spirits are not seen as moral exemplars for practitioners to imitate.[88] The lwa can be either loyal or capricious in their dealings with their devotees;[48] they are easily offended, for instance if offered food they dislike.[89] When angered, the lwa are believed to remove their protection from their devotees, or to inflict misfortune, illness, or madness on an individual.[90]

Although there are exceptions, most lwa derive their names from the Fon and Yoruba languages and originated as deities venerated in West or Central Africa.[91] New lwa are nevertheless added to the pantheon, with both talismans and certain humans thought capable of becoming lwa,[92] in the latter case through their strength of personality or power.[93] Vodouists often refer to the lwa living in the sea or in rivers,[86] or alternatively in Ginen,[87] a term encompassing a generalized understanding of Africa as the ancestral land of the Haitian people.[94]

The nanchon

A painting of the lwa Danbala, a serpent, by Haitian artist Hector Hyppolite. Hyppolite was himself an oungan[95]

The lwa divide into nanchon or "nations".[96] This classificatory system derives from the way in which enslaved Africans were divided into "nations" upon their arrival in Haiti, usually based on their African port of departure rather than their ethno-cultural identity. [48] The term fanmi (family) is sometimes used synonymously with nanchon or alternatively as a sub-division of the latter category.[97] It is often claimed that there are 17 nanchon,[98] of which the Rada and the Petwo are the largest and most dominant. [99]

The Rada lwa are seen as being 'cool'; the Petwo lwa as 'hot'.^[100] This means that the Rada are dous or doux, or sweet-tempered, while the Petwo are lwa cho, indicating that they can be forceful or violent and are associated with fire.^[101] Whereas the Rada are generally righteous, their Petwo counterparts are more morally ambiguous and associated with issues like money.^[102] The Rada owe more to Dahomeyan and Yoruba influences;^[103] their name probably comes from Arada, a city in the Dahomey kingdom of West Africa.^[104] The Petwo derive largely from Kongo religion,^[105] although also exhibit Dahomeyan and creolised influences.^[106] Some lwa exist andezo or en deux eaux, meaning that they are "in two waters" and are served in both Rada and Petwo rituals.^[107]

Vodou teaches that there are over a thousand lwa,^[81] although certain ones are especially widely venerated.^[108] In Rada ceremonies, the first lwa saluted is Papa Legba, also known as Legba.^[109] Depicted as a feeble old man wearing rags and using a crutch,^[110] Papa Legba is the protector of gates and fences and thus of the home, as well as of roads, paths, and crossroads.^[111] In Petwo rites, the first lwa invoked is usually Mèt Kalfou.^[112] The second lwa usually greeted are the Marasa or sacred twins.^[113] In Vodou, every nanchon has its own Marasa,^[114] reflecting a belief that twins have special powers.^[115] Another important lwa is Agwe, also known as Agwe-taroyo, who is associated with aquatic life and is the protector of ships and fishermen.^[116] Agwe is believed to rule the sea with his consort, La Sirène.^[117] She is a mermaid, and is sometimes described as Èzili of the Waters because she is believed to bring good luck and wealth from the sea.^[118] Also given the name Èzili is Èzili Freda or Erzuli Freda, the lwa of love and luxury who personifies feminine beauty and grace,^[119] and Ezili Dantor, who takes the form of a peasant woman.^[120]

A vèvè pattern designed to invoke Baron Samedi, the chief of the Gede lwa Azaka is the lwa of crops and agriculture,^[121] usually addressed as "Papa" or "Cousin".^[122] His consort is the female lwa Kouzinn.^[123] Loco is the lwa of vegetation, and because he is seen to give healing properties to various plant species is considered the lwa of healing too.^[124] Ogou is a warrior lwa,^[125] associated with weapons.^[126] Sogbo is a lwa associated with lightning,^[127] while his companion, Bade, is associated with the wind.^[128] Danbala is a serpent lwa and is associated with water, being believed to frequent rivers, springs, and marshes;^[129] he is one of the most popular deities in the pantheon.^[130] Danbala and his consort Ayida-Weddo are often depicted as a pair of intertwining snakes.^[129] The Simbi are understood as the guardians of fountains and marshes.^[131]

Usually seen as a fanmi rather than a nanchon,^[132] the Gede are associated with the realm of the dead.^[133] The head of the family is Baron Samedi ("Baron Saturday");^[134] he is associated with the phallus, the skull, and the graveyard cross,^[135] the latter used to mark out his presence in a Haitian cemetery.^[136] His consort is Gran Brigit,^[137] who has authority over cemeteries and is mother to many of the other Gede.^[138]

The Gede regularly satirise the ruling authorities,[139] and are welcomed to rituals as they are thought to bring merriment.[133] The Gede's symbol is an erect penis,[140] while the banda dance associated with them involves sexual-style thrusting,[141] and those possessed by these lwa typically make sexual innuendos.[142]

The lwa and the saints

Most lwa are associated with specific Roman Catholic saints.[143] These particular links rely on analogies between the respective functions of these figures:[144] Azaka, the lwa of agriculture, is for instance associated with Saint Isidore the farmer.[145] Similarly, because he is understood as the "key" to the spirit world, Papa Legba is typically associated with Saint Peter, who is traditionally depicted holding keys in Roman Catholic imagery.[146] The lwa of love and luxury, Èzili Freda, is associated with Mater Dolorosa.[147] Danbala the serpent is often equated with Saint Patrick, who is traditionally depicted with snakes, or with Moses, whose staff turned into serpents according to the Book of Exodus.[148] The Marasa, or sacred twins, are typically equated with the twin saints Cosmos and Damian.[149]

Vodouists may originally have adopted the Roman Catholic saints to conceal lwa worship when the latter was illegal during the colonial period.[150] By at least the late 20th century, many Vodouists came to express genuine devotion to the Roman Catholic saints,[151] with the scholar Marc A. Christophe stating that most modern Vodouists genuinely see the saints and lwa as one, reflecting Vodou's "all-inclusive and harmonizing characteristics".[152] Many Vodouists possess chromolithographic prints of the saints,[151] while images of these Christian figures can also be found on temple walls,[153] and on the drapo flags used in Vodou ritual.[154] Vodouists also often adopt and reinterpret biblical stories and theorise about the nature of Jesus of Nazareth.[155] Catholic and Vodou identity is sufficiently intertwined that a Haitian proverb maintains that "pou sevi lwa yo se pou w bon katolik" ("you have to be a good Catholic to serve the spirits").[156]

Soul and afterlife

A Haitian drapo banner depicting a Roman Catholic saint

Vodou holds that Bondye created humanity in its image, fashioning humans from water and clay.[157] It teaches the existence of a soul, usually called the nanm,[158] or sometimes the espri,[159] which is divided in two parts.[160] One of these is the ti bonnanj ("little good angel"), understood as the conscience that allows an individual to engage in self-reflection and self-criticism. The other part is the gwo bonnanj ("big good angel") and this constitutes the psyche, source of memory, intelligence, and personhood.[161] Both parts are believed to reside within an individual's head,[162] although the gwo bonnanj is thought capable of leaving the head and travelling while a person sleeps.[163]

Vodouists believe that every individual is connected to a specific lwa, regarded as their mèt tèt (master of the head).[164] They believe that this lwa informs the individual's

personality.[165] Vodou holds that the identity of a person's tutelary lwa can be identified through divination or by consulting lwa when they possess other humans.[166] Some of the religion's priests and priestesses are deemed to have "the gift of eyes", capable of seeing the identity of a person's tutelary lwa.[167]

Vodou holds that Bondye has preordained the time of everyone's death,[168] but does not teach the existence of an afterlife realm akin to the Christian ideas of heaven and hell.[169] Instead, a common belief is that at bodily death, the gwo bonnanj join the Ginen, or ancestral spirits, while the ti bonnanj proceeds to face judgement before Bondye.[170] This idea of judgement is more common in urban areas, having been influenced by Roman Catholicism, while in the Haitian mountains it is more common for Vodouists to believe that the ti bonnanj dissolves into the navel of the earth nine days after death.[171] The land of the Ginen is often identified as being located beneath the sea, under the earth, or above the sky.[172] Some Vodouists believe that the gwo bonnanj stays in the land of the Ginen for a year and a day before being absorbed into the Gede family.[173] However, Vodouists usually distinguish the spirits of the dead from the Gede proper, for the latter are lwa.[174] Vodou also teaches that the dead continue to participate in human affairs,[175] with these spirits often complaining that they suffer from hunger, cold, and damp,[176] and thus requiring sacrifices from the living.[76]

Morality, ethics, and gender roles

See also: Haitian Vodou and sexual orientation

Vodou ethical standards correspond to its sense of cosmological order,[72] with a belief in the interdependence of things playing a role in Vodou approaches to ethical issues. [177] Serving the lwa is central to Vodou and its moral codes reflect the reciprocal relationship that practitioners have with these spirits;[178] for Vodouists, virtue is maintained by ensuring a responsible relationship with the lwa.[88] Vodou also promotes a belief in destiny, although individuals are still deemed to have freedom of choice.[179] This view of destiny has been interpreted as encouraging a fatalistic outlook,[180] something that the religion's critics, especially from Christian backgrounds, have argued has discouraged Vodouists from improving their society.[181] This has been extended into an argument that Vodou is responsible for Haiti's poverty,[182] a view that in turn has been accused of being rooted in European colonial prejudices towards Africans. [183]

A vèvè pattern designed to invoke Papa Legba, one of the main lwa spirits worshipped in Haitian Vodou

Although Vodou permeates every aspect of its adherent's lives,[184] it offers no prescriptive code of ethics.[185] Rather than being rule-based, Vodou morality is deemed contextual to the situation,[186] with no clear binary division between good and evil.[187] Vodou reflects people's everyday concerns, focusing on techniques for mitigating illness and misfortune;[188] doing what one needs to in order to survive is considered a high ethic.[189] Among Vodouists, a moral person is regarded as someone who lives in tune with their character and that of their tutelary lwa.[186] In

general, acts that reinforce Bondye's power are deemed good; those that undermine it are seen as bad.[72] Maji, meaning the use of supernatural powers for self-serving and malevolent ends, are usually thought bad.[190] The term is quite flexible; it is usually used to denigrate other Vodouists, although some practitioners have used it as a self-descriptor in reference to Petwo rites.[191]

The extended family is of importance in Haitian society,[192] with Vodou reinforcing family ties,[193] and emphasising respect for the elderly.[194] Although there are accounts of male Vodou priests mistreating their female followers,[195] in the religion women can also lay claim to moral authority as social and spiritual leaders.[196] Vodou is also considered sympathetic to gay people,[197] with many gay and bisexual individuals holding status as Vodou priests and priestesses,[198] and some groups having largely gay congregations.[199] Some Vodouists state that the lwa determine a person's sexual orientation.[200] The lwa Èzili Dantò is sometimes regarded as a lesbian,[201] and forms of Èzili are also seen as the patron of masisi (gay men).[202]

Practices

The anthropologist Alfred Métraux described Vodou as "a practical and utilitarian religion".[86] Its practices largely revolve around interactions with the lwa,[203] and incorporate song, drumming, dance, prayer, spirit possession, and animal sacrifice.[204] Practitioners gather together for sèvices (services) in which they commune with the lwa.[205] Ceremonies for a particular lwa often coincide with the feast day of the Roman Catholic saint which that lwa is associated with.[206] The mastery of ritual forms is considered imperative in Vodou.[207] The purpose of ritual is to echofe ("heat things up"), thus bringing about change, whether that be to remove barriers or to facilitate healing.[208] Ritual activities are often termed travay (work).[209]

Secrecy is important in Vodou.[210] It is an initiatory tradition,[211] operating through a system of graded induction or initiation.[102] When an individual agrees to serve a lwa, it is deemed a lifelong commitment.[212] Vodou has a strong oral culture, and its teachings are primarily disseminated through oral transmission,[213] although many practitioners began to use texts after they appeared in the mid-20th century.[214] The terminology used in Vodou ritual is called langaj.[215] Unlike in Santería and Candomblé, which employ Yoruba as a liturgical language not understood by most practitioners, in Vodou the liturgies are predominantly in Haitian Creole, the everyday language of most Vodouists.[216]

Oungan and Manbo

Ceremonial suit worn in Haitian Vodou rites, on display in the Ethnological Museum of Berlin, Germany

Male priests are referred to as an oungan, alternatively spelled houngan or hungan,[217] or a prèt Vodou ("Vodou priest").[218] Priestesses are termed manbo, alternatively spelled mambo.[219] Oungan numerically dominate in rural Haiti, while there is a more equitable balance of priests and priestesses in urban areas.[220] The oungan and

manbo are tasked with organising liturgies, preparing initiations, offering consultations with clients using divination, and preparing remedies for the sick.[221] There is no priestly hierarchy, with oungan and manbo being largely self-sufficient.[221] In many cases, the role is hereditary.[222] Historical evidence suggests that the role of the oungan and manbo intensified over the course of the 20th century.[223] As a result, "temple Vodou" is now more common in rural areas of Haiti than it was in historical periods.[224]

Vodou teaches that the lwa call an individual to become an oungan or manbo,[225] and if the latter refuses then misfortune may befall them.[226] A prospective oungan or manbo must normally rise through the other roles in a Vodou congregation before undergoing an apprenticeship with a pre-existing oungan or manbo lasting several months or years.[227] After this apprenticeship, they undergo an initiation ceremony, the details of which are kept secret from non-initiates.[228] Other oungan and manbo do not undergo any apprenticeship, but claim that they have gained their training directly from the lwa.[229] Their authenticity is often challenged, and they are referred to as hungan-macoutte, a term bearing some disparaging connotations.[227] Becoming an oungan or manbo is expensive, often requiring the purchase of ritual paraphernalia and land on which to build a temple.[230] To finance this, many save up for a long time.[230]

Vodouists believe that the oungan's role is modelled on the lwa Loco;[231] in Vodou mythology, he was the first oungan and his consort Ayizan the first manbo.[232] The oungan and manbo are expected to display the power of second sight,[233] something regarded as a gift from Bondye that can be revealed to the individual through visions or dreams.[234] Many priests and priestesses are often attributed fantastical powers in stories told about them,[235] and may bolster their status with claims to have received revelations from the lwa, sometimes via visits to the lwa's own abode.[236]

There is often bitter competition between different oungan and manbo.[237] Their main income derives from healing the sick, supplemented with payments received for overseeing initiations and selling talismans and amulets.[238] In many cases, oungan and manbo become wealthier than their clients.[239] Oungan and manbo are generally powerful and well-respected members of Haitian society.[240] Being an oungan or manbo provides an individual with both social status and material profit,[241] although the fame and reputation of individual priests and priestesses can vary widely.[242] Respected Vodou priests and priestesses are often literate in a society where semi-literacy and illiteracy are common.[243] They can recite from printed texts and write letters for illiterate members of their community.[243] Owing to their prominence in a community, the oungan and manbo can effectively become political leaders,[234] or otherwise exert an influence on local politics.[241]

The ounfò

A Vodou temple is called an ounfò,[244] varyingly spelled hounfò,[245] hounfort,[246] or humfo.[34] An alternative term is gangan, although the connotations of this term vary regionally in Haiti.[247] Most communal Vodou activities centre around this ounfò,[232]

forming what is called "temple Vodou".[35] The size and shape of ounfòs vary, from basic shacks to more lavish structures, the latter being more common in Port-au-Prince. [232] Their designs are dependent on the resources and tastes of the oungan or manbo running them.[248] Each ounfò is autonomous,[249] and often has its own unique customs.[250]

A Vodou peristil in Croix des Mission, Haiti, photographed in 1980

The main ceremonial room in the ounfò is the peristil,[251] understood as a microcosmic representation of the cosmos.[252] In the peristil, brightly painted posts hold up the roof; [253] the central post is the poto mitan,[254] which is used as a pivot during ritual dances and the pillar through which the lwa enter the room during ceremonies.[253] It is around this central post that offerings, including both vèvè patterns and animal sacrifices, are made.[203] However, in the Haitian diaspora many Vodouists perform their rites in basements, where no poto mitan are available.[255] The peristil typically has an earthen floor, allowing libations to the lwa to drain directly into the soil;[256] where this is not possible, libations are poured into an enamel basin.[257] Some peristil include seating around the walls.[258]

Adjacent rooms in the ounfò include the caye-mystères, also known as the bagi, badji, or sobadji.[259] This is where stonework altars, known as pè, stand against the wall or are arranged in tiers.[259] Also present may be a sink dedicated to the lwa Danbala-Wedo.[260] The caye-mystères is also used to store clothing that will be worn by those possessed by the lwa during rituals.[261] If space is available, the ounfò may also have a room set aside for the patron lwa of that temple.[262] Many ounfòs have a room known as the djévo in which the initiate is confined during their initiatory ceremony.[261] Every ounfò usually has a room or corner of a room devoted to Erzuli Freda.[263] Some ounfò will also have additional rooms in which the oungan or manbo lives.[262]

The area around the ounfò often contains objects dedicated to particular lwa, such as a pool of water for Danbala, a black cross for Baron Samedi, and a pince (iron bar) embedded in a brazier for Criminel.[264] Sacred trees, known as arbres-reposoirs, sometimes mark the ounfò's external boundary.[265] Hanging from these trees can be found macoute straw sacks, strips of material, and animal skulls.[265] Various animals, particularly birds but also some mammal species such as goats, are sometimes kept within the perimeter of the ounfò for use as sacrifices.[265]

The congregation

A Vodou ceremony taking place in an ounfò in Jacmel, Haiti

Forming a spiritual community of practitioners,[203] the ounfò's congregation are known as the pititt-caye (children of the house).[266] They worship under the authority of an oungan or manbo,[34] below whom is ranked the ounsì, individuals who make a lifetime commitment to serving the lwa.[267] Members of either sex can join the ounsì, although most are female.[268] The ounsì's duties include cleaning the peristil, sacrificing

animals, and taking part in the dances at which they must be prepared to be possessed by a lwa.[269] The oungan and manbo conduct initiatory ceremonies whereby people become ounsi,[234] oversee their training,[232] and act as their counsellor, healer, and protector.[270] In turn, the ounsi are expected to be obedient to their oungan or manbo.[269]

One of the ounsi becomes the hungenikon or reine-chanterelle, the mistress of the choir. They are responsible for overseeing the liturgical singing and shaking the chacha rattle which dictates the rhythm during ceremonies.[271] They are aided by the hungenikon-la-place, commandant general de la place, or quartermaster, who is charged with overseeing offerings and keeping order during the rites.[232] Another figure is le confiance (the confidant), the ounsi who oversees the ounfò's administrative functions.[272] Congregants often form a sosyete soutyen (société soutien, support society), through which subscriptions are paid to help maintain the ounfò and organize the major religious feasts.[273] Another ritual figure sometimes present is the prèt savann ("bush priest"), a man with a knowledge of Latin who is capable of administering Catholic baptisms, weddings, and the last rites, and who is willing to perform these at Vodou ceremonies.[274]

In rural areas especially, a congregation may consist of an extended family.[221] Here, the priest will often be the patriarch of that family.[275] Families, particularly in rural areas, often believe that through their zansèt (ancestors) they are tied to a premye mèt bitasyon (original founder); their descent from this figure is seen as giving them their inheritance both of the land and of familial spirits.[32] In other examples, particularly in urban areas, an ounfò can act as an initiatory family.[276] A priest becomes the papa ("father") while the priestess becomes the manman ("mother") to the initiate;[277] the initiate becomes their initiator's pitit (spiritual child).[214] Those who share an initiator refer to themselves as "brother" and "sister".[227] Individuals may join a particular ounfò because it exists in their locality or because their family are already members. Alternatively, it may be that the ounfò places particular focus on a lwa whom they are devoted to, or that they are impressed by the oungan or manbo who runs the ounfò in question, perhaps having been treated by them.[269]

Initiation

A vèvè pattern designed to invoke Gran Brigit, one of the lwa spirits worshipped in Haitian Vodou

Vodou is hierarchical and includes a series of initiations.[278] There are typically four levels of initiation,[279] the fourth of which makes someone an oungan or manbo.[280] There is much variation in what these initiation ceremonies entail,[114] and the details are kept secret.[281] Each initiatory stage is associated with a state of mind called a konesan (connaissance or knowledge).[282] Successive initiations are required to move through the various konesans,[234] and it is in these konesans that priestly power is believed to reside.[283]

The first initiation rite is the kanzo;[284] this term also describes the initiate themselves. [285] Initiation is generally expensive,[286] complex,[280] and requires significant preparation.[114] Prospective initiates are for instance required to memorise many songs and learn the characteristics of various lwa.[114] Vodouists believe the lwa may encourage an individual towards initiation, bringing misfortune upon them if they refuse. [287]

Initiation will often be preceded by bathing in special preparations.[288] The first part of the initiation rite is known as the kouche or huño, and is marked by salutations and offerings to the lwa.[289] It begins with the chire ayizan, a ceremony in which palm leaves are frayed and then worn by the initiate.[114] Sometimes the bat ge or batter guerre ("beating war") is performed instead, designed to beat away the old.[114] During the rite, the initiate comes to be regarded as the child of a particular lwa, their mèt tèt. [114]

This is followed by a period of seclusion within the djèvo known as the kouche.[114] A deliberately uncomfortable experience,[162] it involves the initiate sleeping on a mat on the floor, often with a stone for a pillow.[290] They wear a white tunic,[291] and a specific salt-free diet is followed.[292] It includes a lav tèt ("head washing") to prepare the initiate for having the lwa enter and reside in their head.[293] Voudouists believe that one of the two parts of the human soul, the gwo bonnanj, is removed from the initiate's head, thus making space for the lwa to enter and reside there.[162]

The initiation ceremony requires the preparation of pot tèts (head pots), usually white porcelain cups with a lid in which a range of items are placed, including hair, food, herbs, and oils. These are regarded as a home for the spirits.[294] After the period of seclusion in the djèvo, the new initiate is brought out and presented to the congregation; they are now referred to as ounsì lave tèt.[114] When the new initiate is presented to the rest of the community, they carry their pot tèt on their head, before placing it on the altar. [162] The final stage of the process involves the initiate being given an ason rattle.[295] The initiation process is seen to have ended when the new initiate is first possessed by a lwa.[162] Initiation is seen as creating a bond between a devotee and their tutelary lwa,[296] and the former will often take on a new name that alludes to the name of this lwa.[297] Finally, after the kouche, the new initiate may be expected to visit a Catholic church.[298]

Shrines and altars

An altar in Boston, Massachusetts established during the November festival of the Gede. The creation of sacred works is important in Vodou.[207] Votive objects used in Haiti are typically made from industrial materials, including iron, plastic, sequins, china, tinsel, and plaster.[30]

An altar, or pè, will often contain images (typically lithographs) of Roman Catholic saints. [299] Since developing in the mid-19th century, chromolithography has also had an

impact on Vodou imagery, facilitating the widespread availability of images of the Roman Catholic saints who are equated with the lwa.[300] Various Vodouists have made use of varied available materials in constructing their shrines. Cosentino encountered a shrine in Port-au-Prince where Baron Samedi was represented by a plastic statue of Santa Claus wearing a black sombrero,[301] and in another by a statue of Star Wars-character Darth Vader.[302] In Port-au-Prince, it is common for Vodouists to include human skulls on their altar for the Gede.[218] In ounfòs where both Rada and Petwo deities are worshipped, their altars are kept separate.[303]

Various spaces other than the temple are used for Vodou ritual.[304] Cemeteries are seen as places where spirits reside, making them suitable for certain rituals,[304] especially to approach the spirits of the dead.[305] In rural Haiti, cemeteries are often family owned and play a key role in family rituals.[306] Crossroads are also ritual locations, selected as they are believed to be points of access to the spirit world.[304] Other spaces used for Vodou rituals include Christian churches, rivers, the sea, fields, and markets.[304]

An ason, the ritual rattle emblematic of the Vodou priesthood
Certain trees are regarded as having spirits resident in them and are used as natural altars.[243] Different species of tree are associated with different lwa; Oyu, for example, is linked with mango trees, and Danbala with bougainvillea.[86] Selected trees in Haiti have had metal items affixed to them, serving as shrines to Ogou, who is associated with both iron and the roads.[307] Spaces for ritual also appear in the homes of many Vodouists,[308] namely as a home altar called a wogatwa.[309] These may vary from complex altars to more simple variants including only images of saints alongside candles and a rosary.[35] Many practitioners will also have an altar devoted to their ancestors in their home, to which they direct offerings.[310]

Drawings known as vèvè are sketched onto the floor of the peristil using cornmeal, ash, coffee grounds, or powdered eggshells;[311] these are central to Vodou ritual.[252] Usually arranged symmetrically around the poto-mitan,[312] these designs sometimes incorporate letters;[243] their purpose is to summon lwa.[312] Inside the peristil, practitioners also unfurl ceremonial flags known as drapo (flags) at the start of a ceremony.[313] Often made of silk or velvet and decorated with shiny objects such as sequins,[314] the drapo often feature either the vèvè of specific lwa they are dedicated to or depictions of the associated Roman Catholic saint.[154] These drapo are understood as points of entry through which the lwa can enter the peristil.[315]

A batèms (baptism) is a ritual used to make an object a vessel for the lwa.[316] Objects consecrated for ritual use are believed to contain a spiritual essence or power called nanm.[317] The ason is a sacred rattle used in summoning the lwa,[318] especially for Rada rites.[319] It consists of an empty, dried gourd covered in beads and snake vertebra.[320] Prior to being used in ritual it requires consecration.[321] It is a symbol of the priesthood;[321] assuming the duties of a manbo or oungan is referred to as "taking

the ason".[322] For Petwo rites a different rattle, the tcha-tcha, is favored.[319] Another type of sacred object are the "thunder stones", often prehistoric axe-heads, which are associated with specific lwa and kept in oil to preserve their power.[323]

Offerings and animal sacrifice

A drapo flag, which are used to invoke the lwa at Vodou ceremonies

Feeding the lwa is of great importance,[324] with offering rites often termed manje lwa ("feeding the lwa").[325] Offering food and drink to the lwa is Vodou's most common ritual, conducted both communally and in the home.[324] The choice of food and drink offered varies depending on the lwa in question, with different lwa believed to favor certain foodstuffs and beverages.[326] Danbala for instance requires white foods, especially eggs,[327] while Legba's offerings, whether meat, tubers, or vegetables, need to be grilled on a fire.[324] The lwa of the Ogu and Nago nations prefer raw rum or clairin,[324] while the lwa Ayizan avoids alcohol.[328] Certain foods are also offered in the belief that they are intrinsically virtuous, such as grilled maize, peanuts, and cassava.[178]

A manje sèk (dry meal) is an offering of grains, fruit, and vegetables that often precedes a simple ceremony; it takes its name from the absence of blood.[329] Animal sacrifices are often favored at annual feasts that an oungan or manbo organizes for their congregation.[178] Species used for sacrifice include chickens, goats, and bulls, with pigs often favored for Petwo lwa.[330] The animal may be washed, dressed in the color of the specific lwa, and marked with food or water.[331] Often, the animal's throat will be cut and the blood collected in a calabash.[332] Chickens are often killed by the pulling off of their heads; their limbs may be broken beforehand.[333] In the case of Agwé, a lwa of the sea, a white sheep may be sailed out to Trois Ilets and thrown overboard as a sacrifice.[334]

Once killed, the animal may be butchered and organs removed, sometimes cooked, and placed on the altar or vèvè.[335] Here, it sometimes sits within a kwi, a calabash shell bowl.[336] Vodouists believe that the lwa consume the essence of the food.[178] Food is typically offered when it is cool, and is left for a while before humans may eat it.[336] Offerings not consumed by the celebrants are often buried or left at a crossroads.[337] Libations might be poured into the ground.[178]

The Dans

Multiple styles of drum are employed in Vodou ritual; this example is used in rites invoking Rada lwa

Vodou's nocturnal gatherings are often referred to as the dans ("dance"), reflecting the prominent role that dancing has in such ceremonies.[255] Their purpose is to invite a lwa to enter the ritual space and possess one of the worshippers, through whom they can communicate with the congregation.[338] The success of this procedure is predicated on mastering the different ritual actions and on getting the aesthetic right to

please the lwa.[338] The proceedings can last for the entirety of the night.[255]

On arriving, the congregation typically disperse along the perimeter of the peristil.[255] The ritual often begins with Roman Catholic prayers and hymns;[339] these may be led by the prèt savann, although not all ounfò have anyone in this role.[340] This is followed by the shaking of the ason rattle to summon the lwa.[341] Two Haitian Creole songs, the Priyè Deyò ("Outside Prayers"), may then be sung, lasting from 45 minutes to an hour.[342] The main lwa are then saluted, individually, in a specific order.[342] Legba always comes first, as he is believed to open the way for the others.[342] Each lwa may be offered either three or seven songs, which are specific to them.[343]

The rites employed to call down the lwa vary depending on the nanchon in question.[344] During large-scale ceremonies, the lwa are invited to appear through the drawing of vèvè on the ground using cornmeal.[224] Also used to call down the spirits is a process of drumming, singing, prayers, and dances.[224] Libations and offerings of food are made to the lwa, which includes animal sacrifices.[224] The order and protocol for welcoming the lwa is referred to as regleman.[345]

Dancing at Vodou ceremony in Port-au-Prince in 1976

A symbol of the religion,[346] the drum is perhaps the most sacred item in Vodou.[347] Vodouists believe that ritual drums contain an etheric force, the nanm,[348] and a spirit called ountò.[349] Specific ceremonies accompany the construction of a drum so that it is considered suitable for ritual use.[350] In the bay manje tanbou ("feeding of the drum") ritual, offerings are given to the drum itself.[348] Reflecting its status, when Vodouists enter the peristil they customarily bow before the drums.[351] Different types of drum are used, sometimes reserved for rituals devoted to specific lwa; Petwo rites for instance involve two types of drum, whereas Rada rituals require three.[352] Ritual drummers are called tanbouyès,[353] and becoming one requires a lengthy apprenticeship.[354] The drumming style, choice of rhythm, and composition of the orchestra differs depending on which nation of lwa are being invoked.[355] The drum rhythms typically generate a kase ("break"), which the master drummer will initiate to oppose the main rhythm being played by the rest of the drummers. This is seen as having a destabilizing effect on the dancers and helping to facilitate their possession.[356]

Drumming is typically accompanied by singing,[351] usually in Haitian Creole,[357] although sometimes in Fon or Yoruba.[358] These songs are often structured around a call and response, with a soloist singing a line and the chorus responding with either the same line or an abbreviated version.[359] The soloist is the oundjenikon, who maintains the rhythm with a rattle.[360] Lyrically simple and repetitive, these songs are invocations to summon a lwa.[351] Dancing also plays a major role in ritual,[361] utilising the rhythm of the drummers.[359] The dances are simple, lacking complex choreography, and usually involve the dancers moving counterclockwise around the poto mitan.[362] Specific dance movements can indicate the lwa or their nanchon being summoned;[363]

dances for Agwe for instance imitate swimming motions.[364] Vodouists believe that the lwa renew themselves through the vitality of the dancers.[365]

Spirit possession

Drummer Frisner Augustin in a Vodou ceremony in Brooklyn, New York City during the early 1980s.

Spirit possession is important,[366] being central to many Vodou rituals.[88] The person being possessed is called the chwal (horse);[367] the act of possession is termed "mounting a horse".[368] Vodou teaches that both male and female lwa can possess either men or women.[369] Although children are often present at these ceremonies, [370] they are rarely possessed as it is considered too dangerous.[371] Some individuals attending the dance will put a certain item, often wax, in their hair or headgear to prevent possession.[372] While the specific drums and songs used are designed to encourage a specific lwa to possess someone, sometimes an unexpected lwa appears and takes possession instead.[373]

The possession trance is termed the kriz lwa.[354] Vodouists believe that the lwa enters the head of the chwal and displaces their gwo bon anj,[374] making the chwal tremble and convulse.[375] As their consciousness has been removed from their head during the possession, Vodouists believe that the chwal will have no memory of the incident. [376] The length of the possession varies, often lasting a few hours but sometimes several days.[377] Sometimes a succession of lwa possess the same individual, one after the other.[378] Possession may end with the chwal collapsing in a semi-conscious state,[379] being left physically exhausted.[365]

Once the lwa possesses an individual, the congregation greet it with a burst of song and dance.[365] The chwal will typically bow before the officiating priest or priestess and prostrate before the poto mitan.[380] The chwal is often escorted into an adjacent room where they are dressed in clothing associated with the possessing lwa. Alternatively, the clothes are brought out and they are dressed in the peristil itself.[381] These costumes and props help the chwal take on the appearance of the lwa;[359] many ounfò have a large wooden phallus used by those possessed by Gede lwa, for instance.[382] Once the chwal has been dressed, congregants kiss the floor before them.[369]

The chwal adopts the behavior of the possessing lwa;[383] their performance can be very theatrical.[373] Those believing themselves possessed by the serpent Danbala, for instance, often slither on the floor, dart out their tongue, and climb the posts of the peristil.[129] Those possessed by Zaka, lwa of agriculture, will dress as a peasant in a straw hat with a clay pipe and will often speak in a rustic accent.[384] The chwal will often join in with the dances,[365] eat or drink.[359] Sometimes the lwa, through the chwal, will engage in financial transactions with members of the congregation, for instance by selling them food that has been given as an offering or lending them money. [385]

Possession facilitates direct communication between Vodouists and the lwa;[365] through the chwal, the lwa communicates with their devotees, offering counsel, chastisement, blessings, warnings about the future, and healing.[386] Lwa possession has a healing function, with the possessed individual expected to reveal possible cures to the ailments of those assembled.[365] Clothing that the chwal touches is regarded as bringing luck.[387] The lwa may also offer advice to the individual they are possessing; because the latter is not believed to retain any memory of the events, it is expected that other members of the congregation will pass along the lwa's message.[387] In some instances, practitioners have reported being possessed at other times of ordinary life, such as when someone is in the middle of the market,[388] or when they are asleep.[389]

Divination

A common form of divination employed by oungan and manbo is to invoke a lwa into a pitcher, where it will then be asked questions.[390] Other forms of divination used by Vodouists include the casting of shells,[390] cartomancy,[391] studying leaves, coffee grounds or cinders in a glass, or looking into a candle flame.[392] A form of divination associated especially with Petwo lwa is the use of a gembo shell, sometimes with a mirror attached to one side and affixed at both ends to string. The string is twirled and the directions of the shell used to interpret the responses of the lwa.[390]

Healing

A pakèt kongo on display in the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen in the Netherlands

Healing plays an important role in Vodou.[393] A client will approach a manbo or oungan complaining of illness or misfortune and the latter will use divination to determine the cause and select a remedy.[394] Manbo and oungan typically have a wide knowledge of plants and their medicinal uses.[191] When collecting plants they are expected to show them respect, for instance by leaving coins in payment for removing leaves.[395]

To heal, Vodou specialists often prescribe baths, consisting of water infused with various ingredients,[396] or produce powders for a specific purpose, such as to attract good luck or aid seduction.[397] Alternatively, they may create a material object infused with spirits or medicines, a wanga,[398] although these can also be devoted to harmful purposes.[399] Manbo and oungan often provide talismans,[400] called a pwen (point),[401] travay maji (magic work),[402] pakèt or pakèt kongo.[403] The latter term highlights the potential influence of the Bakongo minkisi on these Haitian ritual creations.[404]

In Haiti, oungan or manbo may advise their clients to seek assistance from medical professionals, while the latter may also send their patients to see an oungan or manbo.[239] Although in the late 20th century there were concerns that the Haitian reliance on oungan and manbo was contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS,[405] by the early 21st century, various NGOs and other groups were working on bringing Vodou officiants into

the broader campaign against the virus.[406] In Haiti, there are also doktè fèy ("herb doctors"; "leaf doctors") who offer herbal remedies for ailments but deal in fewer problems than oungan and manbo.[407]

Harming practices

Vodou teaches that supernatural factors cause or exacerbate many problems.[408] It holds that humans can cause supernatural harm to others, either unintentionally or deliberately,[409] in the latter case exerting power over a person through possession of hair or nail clippings belonging to them.[410] Vodouists also often believe that supernatural harm can be caused by other entities. The lougawou is a human, usually female, who transforms into an animal and drains blood from sleeping victims,[411] while members of the Bizango secret society are feared for their reputed ability to transform into dogs, in which form they walk the streets at night.[412]

An individual who turns to the lwa to harm others is a choché,[187] or a bòkò,[413] although this latter term can also refer to an oungan generally.[187] They are described as someone who sert des deux mains ("serves with both hands"),[414] or is travaillant des deux mains ("working with both hands").[225] As the good lwa have rejected them as unworthy, bòkò are believed to work with lwa achte ("bought lwa"),[415] spirits that will work for anyone who pays them,[416] and often members of the Petwo nanchon.[417] According to Haitian popular belief, bòkò engage in anvwamò ("expeditions"), setting the dead against an individual to cause the latter's sudden illness and death,[418] and utilise baka, malevolent spirits sometimes in animal form.[419] In Haiti, there is much suspicion and censure toward those suspected of being bòkò.[225] The curses of the bòkò are believed to be countered by the oungan and manbo, who can revert the curse through an exorcism that incorporates invocations of protective lwa, massages, and baths.[420] In Haiti, some oungan and manbo have been accused of working with a bòkò, arranging for the latter to curse individuals so that they can financially profit from removing these curses.[225]

Funerals, the dead, and zombis

A cross in a Haitian cemetery, photographed in 2012. The crucifix is central to the iconography of the Gede; the Baron La Croix is a public crucifix associated with Baron Samedi, chief of the Gede.[421]

Vodou features complex funerary customs.[422] Following an individual's death, the desounen ritual frees the gwo bonnanj from their body and disconnects them from their tutelary lwa.[423] The corpse is then bathed in a herbal infusion by an individual termed the benyè, who gives the dead person messages to take with them.[424] A wake, the veye, follows.[425] The body is then buried in the cemetery,[426] often according to Roman Catholic custom.[427]

In northern Haiti, an additional rite takes place at the ounfò on the day of the funeral, the kase kanari (breaking of the clay pot). In this, a jar is washed in substances including kleren, placed within a trench dug into the peristil floor, and smashed. The trench is then

refilled.[428] The night after the funeral, the novena takes place at the home of the deceased, involving Roman Catholic prayers;[429] a mass for them is held a year after death,[430] sometimes performed by a prèt savann.[431] Vodouists fear the dead's ability to harm the living;[432] it is believed that the deceased may for instance punish their living relatives if the latter fail to appropriately mourn them.[433]

Many Vodouists believe that a practitioner's spirit dwells in the land of Ginen, located at the bottom of a lake or river, for a year and a day.[434] A year and a day after death, the wete mò nan dlo ("extracting the dead from the waters of the abyss") ritual may take place, in which the deceased's gwo bonnanj is reclaimed from the realm of the dead and placed into a clay jar or bottle called the govi. Now ensconced in the world of the living, the gwo bonnanj of this ancestor is deemed capable of assisting its descendants and guiding them with its wisdom.[435] Practitioners sometimes believe that failing to conduct this ritual can result in misfortune, illness, and death for the family of the deceased.[436] Offerings then given to this spirit of the dead are termed manje mò.[437] The notion of a spirit being encased in a vessel and then used for workings likely derives from Bakongo influences,[438] and has similarities with the Bakongo-derived Palo religion from Cuba.[439]

Haitian skulls at the Ethnographic Museum in Berlin. In Vodou, human skulls may be used either for sorcery or for healing.[440]

Another belief about the dead, that of zonbis, is one of the most sensationalized aspects of Haitian religion.[441] Zonbi are often regarded as the gwo bonnanj of the recently deceased that have been captured and forced to work for their master.[442] The gwo bonnanj may then be kept inside a bottle or other vessel.[443] The practice is often linked to Chanpwèl (secret societies), which are suspected of murdering the individual they wish to turn into a zonbi.[444] To achieve this, they may obtain the bones of a deceased person, especially their skull, sometimes by bribing cemetery workers;[445] the skull will often be baptised, given food, and set a particular task to specialise in, such as healing a specific malady.[446] Those intending to take a gwo bonnanj as a zonbi may have to borrow or buy them from Baron Samedi.[446]

An alternative idea in Haitian lore is that it is the body that is turned into a zonbi,[447] in which case a bòkò has seized an individual's ti bonnanj and left the body as an empty vessel that can be manipulated.[448] The reality of this phenomenon is contested,[446] although the anthropologist Wade Davis argued that this was based on a real practice whereby Bizango societies used poisons to make certain individuals more pliant.[449] Haitians generally do not fear zonbis, but rather fear becoming one themselves.[448] The figure of the zonbi has also been interpreted as a metaphor for the enslavement central to Haitian history.[450]

Festival

Vodouists washing in a river following a ceremony; photographed in Haiti in 2010

On the saints' days of the Roman Catholic calendar, Vodouists often hold "birthday parties" for the lwa associated with the saint whose day it is.[451] These are marked with special altars for the celebrated lwa,[452] as well as the preparation of their preferred food.[453] Devotions to the Gede are particularly common around the days of the dead, All Saints (1 November) and All Souls (2 November),[454] with celebrations largely taking place in the cemeteries of Port-au-Prince.[455] At this festival, those devoted to the Gede dress in black and purple, with funeral frock coats, black veils, and top hats, all linking to the Gede's associations with death.[456]

The build-up to Easter sees Rara bands, largely consisting of peasants and the urban poor, process through the streets singing and dancing.[457] Each Rara band is considered to be under the patronage of a particular lwa, holding a contract with them that typically lasts seven years.[458] Performing Rara is regarded as a service to the lwa,[459] and some Rara leaders claim that a lwa instructed them to form their band.[460] An oungan will typically be part of the Rara band and will oversee their religious obligations, for instance performing rituals during their procession,[461] or providing members with a benyen protective bath before they perform.[462] They may also attempt to curse or poison rival Rara bands.[463]

Pilgrimage

The Saut d'Eau, a popular pilgrimage site for Vodouists
Pilgrimage is part of Haitian religious culture.[464] In July, Vodouist pilgrims visit Plaine du Nord near Bwa Caiman, where according to legend the Haitian Revolution began. There, sacrifices are made and pilgrims immerse themselves in the twou (mud pits). [465] The pilgrims often mass before the Church of Saint Jacques, with Saint Jacques perceived as being the lwa Ogou.[466] Another popular pilgrimage site, again typically visited in July, is Saut d'Eau ("waterfall") or Sodo, located outside the village of Ville-Bonheur where the Virgin Mary (Èzili) allegedly appeared in the 1840s. At the site, pilgrims bathe under waterfalls associated with water-spirits like Danbala.[467]

Haitian pilgrims commonly wear coloured ropes around their head or waist;[464] a tradition that may derive from a Bakongo custom, kanga ("to tie"), during which sacred objects were bound with rope.[468] Haitians abroad have also established pilgrimage sites, with thousands of Haitians visiting the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in East Harlem, New York City for the feast day of the Virgin, whom the Vodouists in attendance interpret as Èzili Dantò.[469]

History

Before the Revolution

Area of West African Vodun practice, the religion with the greatest influence on Haitian Vodou

In 1492, Christopher Columbus' expedition established a Spanish colony on Hispaniola. [470] A growing European presence decimated the island's Indigenous Taíno

population, both through introduced diseases and exploitation as laborers.[471] The European colonists then turned to imported West African slaves as a new source of labor; Africans first arrived on Hispaniola circa 1512.[472] Most of the enslaved were prisoners of war.[473] Some were probably priests of traditional religions, helping to transport their rites to the Americas.[473] Others were probably Muslim, although Islam exerted little influence on Vodou,[474] while some probably practiced traditional religions that had already absorbed Roman Catholic iconographic influences.[475]

By the late 16th century, French colonists were settling in western Hispaniola; Spain recognized French sovereignty over that part of the island, which became Saint-Domingue, in a series of treaties signed in 1697.[476] Moving away from its previous subsistence economy, in the 18th century Saint-Domingue refocused its economy around the mass export of indigo, coffee, sugar, and cocoa to Europe.[477] To work the plantations, the French colonists placed a renewed emphasis on importing enslaved Africans; whereas there were twice as many Africans as Europeans in the colony in 1681, by 1790 there were eleven times as many Africans as Europeans.[478] Ultimately, Saint-Domingue became the colony with the largest number of slaves in the Caribbean.[479]

Roman Catholicism was the official religion of Saint-Domingue.[480] The Code Noir issued by King Louis XIV in 1685 forbade the open practice of African religions on the colony.[481] This Code compelled slave-owners to have their slaves baptised and instructed as Roman Catholics;[482] the fact that the process of enslavement led to these Africans becoming Christian was a key way in which the slave-owners sought to morally legitimate their actions.[483] However, many slave-owners took little interest in having their slaves instructed in Roman Catholic teaching;[483] they often did not want their slaves to spend time celebrating saints' days rather than laboring and were also concerned that black congregations could provide scope to foment revolt.[484]

Enslavement destroyed the social fabric of African traditional religions, which were typically rooted in ethnic and family membership.[485] Although certain cultural assumptions about the nature of the universe would have been widely shared among the enslaved Africans, they came from diverse linguistic and ethno-cultural backgrounds and had to forge common cultural practices on Hispaniola.[486] According to Desmangles, over the course of the 18th century Vodou gradually emerged as "a composite of various African ethnic traditions", merging diverse practices into a more cohesive form.[487]

African religions had to be practiced secretly, with Roman Catholic iconography and rituals probably used to conceal the true identity of the deities venerated.[488] This resulted in a system of correspondences between African spirits and Roman Catholic saints.[488] Afro-Haitians adopted other aspects of French colonial culture;[489] Vodou drew influence from European grimoires,[490] commedia performances,[491] and Freemasonry, with Masonic lodges having been established across Saint-Domingue in the 18th century.[492] Vodou rituals took place in secret, usually at night; one such rite

was described during the 1790s by a white man, Médéric Louis Élie Moreau de Saint-Méry.[493] Some enslaved Afro-Haitians escaped to form Maroon groups, which often practiced Vodou.[494]

The Haitian Revolution and the 19th century

The Affaire de Bizoton of 1864. The murder and alleged cannibalization of a child by eight Vodou devotees caused a scandal worldwide and was taken as proof of the evil nature of Vodou.

In Haitian lore, Vodou is often presented as having played a vital role in the Haitian Revolution,[21] although scholars debate the extent to which this is true.[495] According to legend, a Vodou ritual took place in Bois-Caïman on 14 August 1791 at which the participants swore to overthrow the slave owners before massacring local whites and sparking the Revolution.[496] Although a popular tale in Haitian folklore, it has no historical evidence to support it.[497] Moreover, two of the revolution's early leaders, Boukman and François Mackandal, were reputed to be powerful oungans.[498] Amid growing rebellion, the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte ordered troops into the colony in 1801,[499] but in 1803 the French conceded defeat and the rebel leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines proclaimed Saint-Domingue to be a new republic named Haiti.[500]

The Revolution broke up the large land-ownings and created a society of small subsistence farmers.[501] Haitians largely began living in lakous, or extended family compounds, which enabled the preservation of African-derived Creole religions.[502] These lakous often had their own lwa rasin (root lwa),[503] being intertwined with concepts of land and kinship.[504] Many Roman Catholic missionaries had been killed in the Revolution,[505] and after its victory Dessalines declared himself head of the Church in Haiti.[505] Protesting these actions, the Roman Catholic Church cut ties with Haiti in 1805;[506] this allowed Vodou to predominate in the country.[507] Many churches left abandoned were adopted for Vodou rites, continuing the syncretization between the two systems.[508] At this point, with no new arrivals from Africa, Vodou began to stabilise,[509] transforming from "a widely-scattered series of local cults" into "a religion".[510] The Roman Catholic Church re-established its formal presence in Haiti in 1860.[507]

Haiti's first three presidents sought to suppress Vodou, using police to break-up rituals which they feared as a source of rebellion.[511] In 1847, Faustin Soulouque became president; he was sympathetic to Vodou and allowed it to be practiced more openly.[512] In the Bizoton Affair of 1863, several Vodou practitioners were accused of ritually killing a child before eating it. Historical sources suggest that they may have been tortured prior to confessing to the crime, at which they were executed.[513] The affair received much attention.[513]

20th century to the present

Haitian president François Duvalier called Vodou "the supreme factor of Haitian unity".

[514]

The United States occupied Haiti between 1915 and 1934,[515] although it faced armed resistance from Haitian peasants, many of them Vodouists.[516] American occupation encouraged international interest in Vodou,[517] something catered for in the sensationalist writings of Faustin Wirkus, William Seabrook, and John Craige,[518] as well as in Vodou-themed shows for tourists.[519] The period also saw the growing influence of the Roman Catholic Church,[520] and in 1941 the Church backed Operation Nettoyage (Operation Cleanup), a government campaign to expunge Vodou, during which many *ounfòs* were destroyed.[521] Violent responses from Vodouists led President Élie Lescot to abandon the Operation.[522]

During the occupation, the *indigénisme* (indigenist) movement developed among Haiti's middle classes, later transmogrifying into the international *Négritude* movement. These encouraged a more positive assessment of Vodou and peasant culture, a trend supported by the appearance of professional ethnological research on the topic from the 1930s onward.[523] Church influence in Haiti was curtailed by François Duvalier, the country's president from 1957 to 1971.[524] Although he restored Catholicism as the state religion, Duvalier was widely perceived as a champion of Vodou,[525] calling it "the supreme factor of Haitian unity".[514] He utilized it for his own purposes, encouraging rumors about his own supernatural powers,[526] and selecting *oungans* as his *chefs-de-sections* (rural section chiefs).[527]

After Duvalier's son and successor, Jean-Claude, was overthrown in 1986, there were attacks on Vodouists perceived to have supported the Duvaliers, partly motivated by Protestant anti-Vodou campaigns; practitioners called this violence the *Dechoukaj* ('uprooting').[528] Two groups, the *Zantray* and *Bode Nasyon*, were formed to defend the rights of Vodouists and hold rallies.[529] Haiti's 1987 constitution enshrined freedom of religion,[530] after which President Jean-Bertrand Aristide granted Vodou official recognition in 2003,[531] thus allowing Vodouists to officiate at civil ceremonies such as weddings and funerals.[532]

A Vodou ceremony taking place at the National Black Theatre in New York City in 2017

The latter half of the 20th century saw the substantial growth of evangelical Protestantism in Haiti, generating tensions with Vodouists.[533] These Protestants regard Vodou as Satanic,[534] and unlike the Roman Catholic authorities have generally refused to compromise with its practitioners.[535] The 2010 Haiti earthquake fuelled conversion from Vodou to Protestantism,[536] with many Protestants claiming that the earthquake was punishment for the sins of the Haitian population, including their practice of Vodou.[537] Mob attacks on Vodouists followed in the wake of the earthquake,[538] and again following the 2010 cholera outbreak.[539]

The first three decades of the 20th century saw growing Haitian migration to eastern Cuba, introducing Vodou to the island.[540] From 1957, many Haitians emigrated to escape Duvalier, taking Vodou with them.[541] In the U.S., Vodou has attracted non-

Haitians, especially African Americans and Caribbean migrants,[417] and has syncretized with other religions like Santería and Spiritism.[417] During the latter half of the 20th century, those seeking to revive New Orleans Voodoo initiated practices that brought the religion closer to Haitian Vodou or Santería than it had been early in that century.[542]

Demographics

Many Vodouists interpret Haiti's flag through their own theology; in this view, the blue is for Ezili Dantò, and the red for Ogou Feray.[543]

Vodou is the majority religion of Haiti,[544] for most Haitians practice both Vodou and Roman Catholicism.[48] An often used joke about Haiti holds that the island's population is 85% Roman Catholic, 15% Protestant, and 100% Vodou.[545] Even some of those who reject Vodou acknowledge its close associations with Haitian identity.[21]

It is difficult to determine how many Haitians practice Vodou, largely because the country has never had an accurate census and many Vodouists will not openly admit they practice the religion.[546] Among the country's middle and upper-classes, for instance, many individuals publicly decry Vodou yet privately practice it.[547] Estimates have nevertheless been made; one suggested that 80% of Haitians practice Vodou, [548] while in 1992, Desmangles put the number of Haitian practitioners at six million. [549] Several scholars have suggested that Haitian religion could be seen as a continuum with Vodou on one end and Roman Catholicism at the other, but with most Haitians operating between the two, going through Roman Catholic rites of passage but turning to Vodou ritual specialists in times of crisis.[550]

Vodouists learn about the religion by taking part in its rituals,[551] with children learning by observing adults.[280] Vodou does not focus on proselytizing;[552] according to Brown, it has "no pretensions to the universal".[544] It has nevertheless spread beyond Haiti; amid the Revolution, many Haitians fled to Louisiana, where their Vodou contributed to the development of Louisiana Voodoo.[553] Since then, Vodou has also spread to other Caribbean countries like the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico,[554] as well as to Western countries such as France,[554] Canada,[209] and the United States.[554] Major *ounfòs* exist in U.S. cities such as Miami, New York City, Washington, DC, Boston, and Oakland, California.[555]

Reception and legacy

Various scholars describe Vodou as one of the world's most maligned and misunderstood religions.[556] Throughout Haitian history, Christians have often presented Vodou as Satanic,[557] while in broader Anglophone and Francophone society it has been widely associated with sorcery, witchcraft, and black magic.[558] In U.S. popular culture, for instance, Haitian Vodou is usually portrayed as destructive and malevolent.[559] Non-practitioners have often depicted Vodou in literature, theater, and film;[560] in many cases, such as the films *White Zombie* (1932) and *London Voodoo* (2004), these promote sensationalist views of the religion.[561] The lack of any central

Vodou authority has hindered efforts to combat these negative representations.[562]

Humanity's relationship with the lwa has been a recurring theme in Haitian art,[338] and the Vodou pantheon was a major topic for the mid-20th century artists of the "Haitian Renaissance".[563] In the late 1950s, art collectors began to take an interest in Vodou ritual paraphernalia and by the 1970s an established market for this material had emerged.[564] Exhibits of Vodou ritual material have been displayed abroad; the Fowler Museum's exhibit on "Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou" for instance traveled the U.S. for three years in the 1990s.[565] Vodou has appeared in Haitian literature,[566] and has also influenced Haitian music, as with the rasin band Boukman Eksperyans,[567] while theatre troupes have performed simulated Vodou rituals for audiences outside Haiti. [568] Documentaries focusing on Vodou have appeared[569]—such as Maya Deren's 1985 film *Divine Horsemen*[570] or Anne Lescot and Laurence Magloire's 2002 work *Of Men and Gods*[571]—which have in turn encouraged some viewers to take a practical interest in the religion.[572]

See also

Haitian mythology

Haitian Vodou art

Voodoo in popular culture

icon Traditional African religion portal

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Notes

"Vodou" is the customary spelling of a word meaning "the traditional religion of the Haitian people".[1] Alternative spellings have included Voodoo /ˈvuːduː/[2] Vaudou /ˈvɔʊduː/;[3] Vodun /ˈvɔʊduː/;[3][4] Vodoun[1][3][4] /ˈvɔʊduːn/; Vodu[5] /ˈvɔʊduː/, or Vaudoux[5] /ˈvɔʊduː/

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The Ars Notoria (Notory Art) is a medieval grimoire, or magical text, claiming to grant users enhanced memory, eloquence, and rapid acquisition of all knowledge (the liberal arts) through prayers, orations, and sacred figures (notae) revealed to King Solomon by angels. Unlike typical grimoires focused on spirit control, it's a "student's grimoire," emphasizing intellectual and spiritual enlightenment via angelic communication, using complex symbols and divine names in various languages.

Key Aspects:

Origin & Attribution: A 13th-century Latin text, attributed to King Solomon, based on older sources, claiming angelic instruction.

Purpose: To enhance mental faculties, memory, understanding, and the ability to master sciences and arts quickly.

Method: Utilizes prayers and invocations to angels, focusing on divine revelation rather than conjuration.

Content: Includes intricate prayers, divine names (Hebrew, Greek, Latin), and complex diagrams called notae (pictorial figures) crucial for operation, notes Yale University, this YouTube video, this YouTube video, this Amazon page, this Barnes & Noble page, Wikipedia, this Facebook post.

Distinction: Stands apart from other Solomonian literature as an "angel magic" text focused purely on intellectual and spiritual knowledge acquisition, lacking typical ritualistic tools like circles or conjurations, notes this YouTube video.

Inclusion: Often found within collections like The Lesser Key of Solomon, though

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In essence, the Ars Notoria is a unique medieval text for gaining divine wisdom and academic prowess through angelic prayer and symbolic visualization, making it a significant artifact in the history of Western esotericism and magic.

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Mar 1, 2016 — Shams al-ma'ārif al-kubrā wa-laṭā'if al-'awārif. by: Būnī, Aḥmad ibn 'Alī, -1225; Ad'hamī, 'Abd al-Qādir, -1907 or 1908.

Shams al-Ma'arif, or The Sun of Knowledge. ...

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This book is a dangerous gateway into the occult, filled with spells and charms that risk dragging readers into the shadowy worlds of jinn, magic, and ...

Al Buni The Sun of Knowledge Shams Al Ma'Arif, An Arabic ...

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'The Sun of Knowledge' (Shams al-Ma'arif), an influential Arabic grimoire by Ahmad ibn Ali al-Buni, who lived in the 13th century.

4.8(19)

Shams al-Ma'arif - the Mansions of the Moon

Renaissance Astrology

<https://www.renaissanceastrology.com/shamsalmaarif-...>

The Shams al-Ma'arif combines magic squares, Arabic letter magic, Quranic verses and the names of Allah with astrological timing.

Shams al-Ma'arif (شمس المعارف): (Arabic Editon Manuscript ...

eBay

<https://www.ebay.com/.../Metaphysical/Astrology>

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Author: Ahmad al-Buni

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Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaldean_Oracles

The Chaldean Oracles are a set of spiritual and philosophical texts widely used by Neoplatonist philosophers from the 3rd to the 6th century CE.

Origin

Importance of the Oracles

Metaphysics of the Oracles

State of the text

The Chaldean Oracles : text, translation and commentary

Internet Archive

<https://archive.org/details/chaldeanoracles0000maje>

Oct 25, 2021 — The Chaldean Oracles : text, translation and commentary by xiv, 247 pages ; 24 cm Includes bibliographical references and index

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Many of the cryptic 'Oracles' seem to reflect Neo-Platonism, the Kabbalah and Gnostic views, which would have been considered heretical at the time.

Chaldean Oracles - OSB

Idysinger.com

<http://www.idysinger.com> › 0150_chaldean_orac

The Chaldean Oracles that came to be regarded by the later Neoplatonists as authoritative revelation on a par with Plato's Timaeus.

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Hekate of the Chaldean Oracles (1)

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The Greek chthonic goddess Hekate as the Platonic Cosmic Soul in the Chaldean Oracles shares many traits with Inanna or Ištar.

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The contents of the oracles on the other hand were were concerned with theology cosmology and especially the means of achieving salvation.

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GRS Mead: The Chaldaean Oracles

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The Chaldean Oracles are a set of spiritual and philosophical texts widely used by Neoplatonist philosophers from the 3rd to the 6th century CE. While the original texts have been lost, they have survived in the form of fragments consisting mainly of quotes and commentary by Neoplatonist writers. Wikipedia

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Celtic Sacred Trees: The Role of Trees in Druidic Rituals ...

Druidic lore and Celtic magic center on deep nature connection, seasonal cycles (Samhain, Beltane), and reverence for sacred groves, oaks, and trees, using divination (bird flight, entrails) and healing arts (herbs, incantations) for community guidance, prophecy, and influence over fortune, fertility, and weather, rooted in oral traditions and symbols like the Ogham tree alphabet, all emphasizing harmony, transformation (fire, water), and the interplay of the physical and spiritual worlds.

Core Concepts & Beliefs

Nature & Spirits: Belief in spirits within nature, trees (especially oaks), and elements (earth, air, fire, water).

Awen: A concept of divine inspiration or spiritual energy.

Cycles: Deep focus on the wheel of the year, marking seasons and cosmic rhythms.

Interconnectedness: Life, death, and rebirth seen as an eternal exchange, maintaining cosmic balance.

Druidic Roles & Practices

Social Class: Priests, philosophers, advisors to kings, judges, healers, and keepers of knowledge.

Oral Tradition: Knowledge passed down orally, requiring years of memorization.

Divination: Reading omens in birds, entrails, and natural phenomena.

Rituals: Held in sacred groves, involving seasonal festivals (Samhain, Beltane, Lughnasa).

Sacred Plants: Mistletoe (harvested with a golden sickle) and rowan trees (protection) held special significance.

Sacrifice: Animal and sometimes human sacrifices offered to gods, often to rivers or lakes.

Ogham: The alphabet of trees used for divination and insight.

Celtic Magic (Lore)

Healing: Spells for wounds, fertility, removing barrenness, and protection.

Transformation: Shapeshifting, invisibility spells, elemental control, and curses (like the "rime" curse).

Fortune: Spells for success in battle, good weather, and prosperity.

Power: Druids could halt battles and compel compromise.

Historical Context & Decline

Sources: Primarily from Greek and Roman accounts, often sensationalized.

Decline: Roman conquest and later Christianization led to persecution and the loss of oral tradition.

Modern Druidry

A revival (from the 18th century) seeking to reconnect with nature, wisdom, and community, adapting ancient principles for contemporary life.

Druids – The MYSTERIOUS Priests of Celtic Culture

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Mar 30, 2018 — The Druids of old were in the highest class in Celtic society, typically living in or near the castles, sitting in cou...

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Who were the Druids? | Celtic Spirituality, Nature, History ...

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Stella Druid discusses the mysterious Druids, their roles as teachers, and their connection to nature.

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<https://kindredspirit.co.uk> › 2023/09/18 › druidry-and-...

Sep 18, 2023 — The original druids were the spiritual elite of the European Celtic cultures of continental Europe and the islands of Britain and Ireland.

The Dark Side Of Druidry | John Beckett

Patheos

<https://www.patheos.com> › Religion Category

Oct 12, 2014 — Druidry is usually associated with Celtic culture and with Nature. Druids are poets, songwriters, and storytellers. Druids plant gardens and ...

Druidism and celtic pagan w/ witchcraft the same or not?

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Many druids practice witchcraft in the Celtic tradition and many would not say they practice witchcraft. Druidry is a combination of philosophy, ...

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PD17: Druids and Magic

The Druid Network

<https://druidnetwork.org> › learning-resources › pd17-dr...

The Celtic tales reflect magic being used to help or harm. In the latter case, magic is seen to affect people against their will.

What terms did Celtic druids use to describe 'magic' as well ...

Quora

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The Druids, as the sarsen stones of spirituality in those pre-Christian lands, did not need a term other than magic for what they did; they were the exemplars ...

4 answers

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Top answer:

Mark, I will readily defer to anyone who has more specialised knowledge of Celtic Druidry; ...

Celtic Tree Magic: Ogham Lore and Druid Mysteries

Amazon.com

<https://www.amazon.com> › Celtic-Tree-Magic-Ogham-...

A practical guide to working with the magical properties, folklore, and divination of the 25 trees in the Celtic ogham tradition.

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Druid Spiritual power/ magic witchcraft/Neo pagan

The British Druid Order

<https://www.druidry.co.uk> › forums › topic › druid-spir...

Jun 17, 2020 — Druid spiritual power comes from the old relationship that druids have with the Celtic Gods and goddesses and the faery people.

Does anyone practice druid or Celtic magic?

Facebook · DRUID

80+ comments · 7 years ago

Modern Druids who practice magic are usually adapting world magical traditions to fit Celtic-style lore and customs. I was a student of ...

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Who were the Druids?

Druid lore centers on ancient Celtic priest-philosophers deeply connected to nature, acting as judges, teachers, and spiritual leaders who preserved sacred oral traditions about theology, astronomy, and healing, with key symbols including the oak tree and mistletoe, and sacred sites in forests. While Roman accounts provide much detail (often biased), Druid practices emphasized harmony with nature, reincarnation, and the interconnectedness of all life, with their knowledge passed down orally for up to 20 years, and their traditions were suppressed by the Romans but saw modern revivals.

Core Beliefs & Practices

Nature Worship: A profound reverence for nature, seeing spirits in trees (especially oaks) and elements, viewing the natural world as divine.

Oral Tradition: Knowledge (philosophy, law, medicine, divination) was memorized in verse, taking decades to learn, and never written down to keep it secret.

Sacred Sites: Rituals occurred in sacred groves (forests) and circles, marking seasonal festivals like Samhain and Beltane.

Roles: Druids were judges, advisors, poets (bards), and seers (ovates), holding high status and exemption from taxes.

Afterlife: Believed in the soul's immortality and reincarnation, viewing the cycle of life, death, and rebirth as central.

Key Symbols & Rituals

Oak & Mistletoe: The oak symbolized strength and wisdom; mistletoe, gathered with a golden sickle, represented life and fertility.

Elements: Honored earth, air, fire, and water for balance and harmony.

Augum Alphabet: An Ogham-like script associated with trees, each letter having unique symbolism.

History & Decline

Roman Conflict: Romans suppressed Druids, viewing their power as a threat, leading to persecution and decline.

Loss of Knowledge: The oral tradition's loss after Roman conquest and Christianization meant much knowledge was lost.

Modern Revival

Neo-Druidism: A 18th-century revival began, blending nature worship, environmentalism, and spirituality, distinct from but inspired by ancient lore, with modern groups forming today.

The Druids - Classic History

Oct 8, 2022 — Approximate extent of Druid priesthood, circa 100 BC. Druid tradition was mainly handed down to successive generations ...

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A Deep Dive into Druids | Human Voiced, No Ads

May 16, 2025 — this is almost unimaginable power and it illustrates the respect. and even reverence druids commanded in Celtic societ...

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Druidism originated in Britain, Druids met in caves, and today the symbolism of caves and of animals acts as an inspiration for the modern Druid movement, ...

The Celtic Path

Celtic Druid Temple

<https://www.celticdruidtemple.com> › the-celtic-path

In Celtic Druidism, there is no dogma because it is a spiritual path that requires freedom to grow and shine as one connects to all that is.

Who were the Druids?

Historic UK

<https://www.historic-uk.com> › HistoryofWales › Druids

Druids were concerned with the natural world and its powers, and considered trees sacred, particularly the oak.

Meanwhile, in Ireland: The Druids, Not What People Think

The Comenian

<https://comenian.org> › news › meanwhile-in-ireland-the-...

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History Undressed

<https://www.historyundressed.com> › 2008/09 › celtic-lo...

Sep 1, 2008 — The Druids were considered to have magical powers, being able to shape-shift or become invisible, create storms, cause a woman and cattle to be fertile.

Where can I learn more about ancient Druidic religion?

Reddit · r/history

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Modern forms of Druidism were made up by enthusiasts in the '50s and '60s. There is no unbroken line of tradition leading from ancient times to ...

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The Druids - Classic History

classichistory.net

<http://www.classichistory.net> › archives › druids

Oct 8, 2022 — There is much debate on where the Druid people came from. Our classical texts determine that they originated as a mixture of indigenous ...

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Celtic magic involves ancient practices from Celtic cultures, focusing on nature, deities (like Merlin, Ceridwen), and the land, using tools like the Ogham alphabet and poetic verse for divination, healing, and transformation, encompassing both benevolent and darker aspects, with practices centered on connection to spirits, ancestors, and the Otherworld, distinct from but influential on modern paganism. Key elements include Druidic wisdom, plant lore, storytelling, and the potent use of words and music.

[Core Concepts & Elements](#)

Nature & Land: A deep reverence for the land, trees (especially oak and mistletoe), rivers, and natural cycles forms the foundation.

Spirits & Deities: Working with gods, goddesses (like Ceridwen), heroes (like Cuchulain), fairies, and land spirits is central.

The Otherworld: Belief in a parallel spiritual realm, a source of wisdom and magic.

The Spoken Word: Poetry, hymns, and chants (like cantalon) were considered magical tools for accomplishing effects.

Ogham: An ancient alphabet of notches, used for communication, divination, and working with tree lore.

Transformation: Figures like Math and Gwydion could transform people into animals, a key magical act.

Examples of Magic in Mythology & Practice

Merlin (Miran): Gained prophetic gifts after madness in the forest, a figure blending Druidism and magic.

Ceridwen's Cauldron: A sentient cauldron bestowing wisdom, central to Welsh myth.

Druidic Rituals: Involving oak groves, mistletoe, and potentially complex chants.

Divination: Using Ogham, casting lots (sticks, stones), and interpreting natural signs.

Curses & Blessings: Ancient inscriptions (like the Larzac tablet) show curses, while St. Patrick's loricae (protective prayers) show blessings.

Modern Practice

Revival: A modern resurgence involves learning from ancient sources, focusing on personal connection, and using traditional Celtic elements in ritual.

Practical Applications: Includes spellwork, meditation, working with Celtic deities, creating offerings, and herbal magic, with books serving as guides.

A History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe Part 3: The Celtic World

May 7, 2024 — line um so this complicates. looking at uh Witchcraft and Magic as well because a lot of Celtic religious practices Rom...

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World Spirituality

Celtic Magic (Llewellyn's World Religion & Magick) - Amazon.com

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modern magical practice with "Celtic" inspiration. There are books by Peter Berresford Ellis, Celtic Heritage by Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, ...

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).Words, singing and poetic speech were considered magical in Celtic culture, and certain forms of poetry or verse were used for accomplishing effects.

Celtic Magic

World Spirituality

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The Celts, like all other races, were devoted to magical practices, many of which could be used by anyone but some specifically for use by Druids.

The Book of Celtic Magic: Transformative Teachings from ...

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A comprehensive guide to Welsh Celtic magic, offering practical instruction in authentic rituals, spells, and spiritual practices rooted in over two thousand ...

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Two Druids, 19th-century engraving based on a 1719 illustration by Bernard de Montfaucon, who said that he was reproducing a bas-relief found at Autun, Burgundy[1]
Part of a series on
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A druid was a member of the high-ranking priestly class in ancient Celtic cultures. The druids were religious leaders as well as legal authorities, adjudicators, lorekeepers, medical professionals and political advisors. Druids left no written accounts. While they were reported to have been literate, they are believed to have been prevented by doctrine from recording their knowledge in written form. Their beliefs and practices are attested in some detail by their contemporaries from other cultures, such as the Romans and the Greeks.

The earliest known references to the druids date to the 4th century BCE. The oldest

detailed description comes from Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* (50s BCE). They were described by other Roman writers such as Cicero,[2] Tacitus,[3] and Pliny the Elder.[4] Following the Roman invasion of Gaul, the druid orders were suppressed by the Roman government under the 1st-century CE emperors Tiberius and Claudius, and had disappeared from the written record by the 2nd century.

In about 750 CE, the word druid appears in a poem by Blathmac, who wrote about Jesus, saying that he was "better than a prophet, more knowledgeable than every druid, a king who was a bishop and a complete sage." [5] The druids often appear in both the tales from Irish mythology first written down by monks and nuns of the Celtic Church like the "*Táin Bó Cúailnge*" (12th century), but also in later Christian legends where they are largely portrayed as sorcerers who opposed the introduction of Christianity by missionaries.[6] In the wake of the Celtic revival during the 18th and 19th centuries, fraternal and neopagan groups were founded based on ideas about the ancient druids, a movement known as Neo-Druidism. Many popular notions about druids, based on misconceptions of 18th-century scholars, have been largely superseded by more recent study.[7]

Etymology

The English word druid derives from the Latin word *druidēs* (plural), which was considered by ancient Roman writers to come from the native Gaulish word for these figures.[8][9][10] Other Roman texts employ the form *druidae*, while the same term was used by Greek ethnographers as *δρυῖδης* (*druidēs*).[11][12] Although no extant Romano-Celtic inscription is known to contain the form,[8] the word is cognate with the later insular Celtic words: Old Irish *druí* 'druid, sorcerer'; Old Cornish *druw*; and Middle Welsh *dryw* 'seer; wren'. [10] Based on all available forms, the hypothetical proto-Celtic word may be reconstructed as **dru-wid-s* (pl. **druwides*), whose original meaning is traditionally taken to be "oak-knower", based upon the association of druids' beliefs with oak trees, which was made by Pliny the Elder, who also suggested that the word is borrowed from the Greek word *δρῦς* (*drŷs*) 'oak tree' [13][10][14][15][16] but nowadays it is more often understood as originally meaning 'one with firm knowledge' (i.e. 'a great sage'), [17][18] as Pliny is the only ancient author drawing the association between oaks and druids [19] and the intensifying modifier sense of the first element fits better with other similar compounds attested in Old Irish (*suí* 'sage, wise man' < **su-wid-s* 'good knower', *duí* 'idiot, fool' < **du-wid-s* 'bad knower', *ainb* 'ignorant' < **an-wid-s* 'not-knower'). The two elements go back to the Proto-Indo-European roots **deru-* [20] and **weid-* "to see". [21] Both Old Irish *druí* and Middle Welsh *dryw* could refer to the wren, [10] possibly connected with an association of that bird with augury in Irish and Welsh tradition (see also Wren Day). [10][22]

Practices and doctrines

Sources by ancient and medieval writers provide an idea of the religious duties and social roles involved in being a druid.

Societal role and training

Imaginative illustration of 'An Arch Druid in His Judicial Habit', from *The Costume of the Original Inhabitants of the British Islands* by S.R. Meyrick and C.H. Smith (1815), the gold gorget collar copying Irish Bronze Age examples.[23]

The Greco-Roman and the vernacular Irish sources agree that the druids played an important part in pagan Celtic society. In his description, Julius Caesar wrote that they were one of the two most important social groups in the region (alongside the equites, or nobles) and were responsible for organizing worship and sacrifices, divination, and judicial procedure in Gallic, British, and Irish societies.[24][failed verification] He wrote that they were exempt from military service and from paying taxes, and had the power to excommunicate people from religious festivals, making them social outcasts.[24] Two other classical writers, Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, wrote about the role of druids in Gallic society, stating that the druids were held in such respect that if they intervened between two armies they could stop the battle.[25]

Diodorus writes of the Druids that they were "philosophers" and "men learned in religious affairs" who are honored.[26] Strabo mentions that their domain was both natural philosophy and moral philosophy,[27] while Ammianus Marcellinus lists them as investigators of "obscure and profound subjects".[28]

Pomponius Mela was the first author to say that the druids' instruction was secret and took place in caves and forests.[29] Cicero said that he knew a Gaulish druid who "claimed to have that knowledge of nature which the Greeks call *physiologia*, and he used to make predictions, sometimes by means of augury and sometimes by means of conjecture".[30]

Druidic lore consisted of a large number of memorized verses, and Caesar remarked that it could take up to twenty years to complete the course of study. What was taught to druid novices anywhere is conjecture: of the druids' oral literature, not one certifiably ancient verse is known to have survived, even in translation. All instruction was communicated orally, but for ordinary purposes, Caesar reports,[31] the Gauls had a written language in which they used Greek letters. In this he probably draws on earlier writers; by the time of Caesar, Gaulish inscriptions had moved from Greek script to Latin script.

Caesar believed that this practice of oral transmission of knowledge and opposition to recording their ideas had dual motivations: wanting to keep druidic knowledge from becoming common, and improving the druids' faculties of memory.[32] Caesar writes that of the Druids "a large number of the young men resort for the purpose of instruction".[33] Due to the privileges afforded to the druids he tells us that "many embrace this profession of their own accord", whereas many others are sent to become druids by their families.[34]

Sacrifice

Further information: Celts and human sacrifice, Threefold death, and Ritual of oak and

mistletoe

An 18th century illustration of a wicker man, the form of execution that Caesar wrote the druids used for human sacrifice. From the "Duncan Caesar", Tonson, Draper, and Dodsley edition of the Commentaries of Caesar translated by William Duncan and published in London in 1753.

Greek and Roman writers frequently made reference to the druids as practitioners of human sacrifice.[35] Caesar says those who had been found guilty of theft or other criminal offences were considered preferable for use as sacrificial victims, but when criminals were in short supply, innocents would be acceptable. A form of sacrifice recorded by Caesar was the burning alive of victims in a large wooden effigy, now often known as a wicker man. A differing account came from the 10th-century *Commenta Bernensia*, which stated that sacrifices to the deities Teutates, Esus, and Taranis were by drowning, hanging, and burning, respectively (see threefold death).

Diodorus Siculus asserts that a sacrifice acceptable to the Celtic gods had to be attended by a druid, for they were the intermediaries between the people and the divinities. He remarked upon the importance of prophets in druidic ritual:

These men predict the future by observing the flight and calls of birds and by the sacrifice of holy animals: all orders of society are in their power ... and in very important matters they prepare a human victim, plunging a dagger into his chest; by observing the way his limbs convulse as he falls and the gushing of his blood, they are able to read the future.

Archaeological evidence from western Europe has been widely used to support the theory that Iron Age Celts practiced human sacrifice. Mass graves that were found in a ritual context, which date from this period, have been unearthed in Gaul, at both Gournay-sur-Aronde and Ribemont-sur-Ancre in the region of the Belgae chiefdom. Jean-Louis Brunaux, the excavator of these sites, interpreted them as areas of human sacrifice in devotion to a war god,[36][37] although this conclusion was criticized by archaeologist Martin Brown, who believed that the corpses might be those of honoured warriors who were buried in the sanctuary, rather than sacrifices.[38] Some historians have questioned whether the Greco-Roman writers were accurate in their claims. J. Rives remarked that it was "ambiguous" whether druids ever performed such sacrifices, for the Romans and Greeks were known to project what they saw as barbarian traits onto foreign peoples including not only druids but Jews and Christians as well, thereby confirming their own "cultural superiority" in their own minds.[39]

Nora Chadwick, an expert in medieval Welsh and Irish literature who believed the druids to be great philosophers, has also supported the idea that they had not been involved in human sacrifice, and that such accusations were imperialist Roman propaganda.[40]

Philosophy

Alexander Cornelius Polyhistor referred to the druids as philosophers, and called their

doctrine of the immortality of the soul and metempsychosis (reincarnation),
"Pythagorean":

The Pythagorean doctrine prevails among the Gauls' teaching that the souls of men are immortal, and that after a fixed number of years they will enter into another body

Caesar made similar observations:

With regard to their actual course of studies, the main object of all education is, in their opinion, to imbue their scholars with a firm belief in the indestructibility of the human soul, which, according to their belief, merely passes at death from one tenement to another; for by such doctrine alone, they say, which robs death of all its terrors, can the highest form of human courage be developed. Subsidiary to the teachings of this main principle, they hold various lectures and discussions on the stars and their movement, on the extent and geographical distribution of the earth, on the different branches of natural philosophy, and on many problems connected with religion.

—Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 14

Diodorus Siculus, writing in 36 BCE, described how the druids followed "the Pythagorean doctrine", that human souls "are immortal, and after a prescribed number of years they commence a new life in a new body".[41] In 1928, the folklorist Donald A. Mackenzie speculated that Buddhist missionaries had been sent by the Indian king Ashoka.[42] Caesar noted the druidic doctrine that the original ancestor of the tribe was the god that he referred to as "Dispater", which means "Father Dis".

Diogenes Laertius, in the 3rd century CE, wrote that "Druids make their pronouncements by means of riddles and dark sayings, teaching that the gods must be worshipped, and no evil done, and manly behavior maintained".[43]

Druids in mythology

Druids play a prominent role in Irish folklore, generally serving lords and kings as high ranking priest-counselors with the gift of prophecy and other assorted mystical abilities – the best example of these possibly being Cathbad. The chief druid in the court of King Conchobar mac Nessa of Ulster, Cathbad features in several tales, most of which detail his ability to foretell the future. In the tale of Deirdre of the Sorrows – the foremost tragic heroine of the Ulster Cycle – the druid prophesied before the court of Conchobar that Deirdre would grow up to be very beautiful, and that kings and lords would go to war over her, much blood would be shed because of her, and Ulster's three greatest warriors would be forced into exile for her sake. This prophecy, ignored by the king, came true.
[44]

The greatest of these mythological druids was Amergin Glúingel,[45] a bard and judge for the Milesians featured in the Mythological Cycle. The Milesians were seeking to overrun the Tuatha Dé Danann and win the land of Ireland but, as they approached, the druids of the Tuatha Dé Danann raised a magical storm to bar their ships from making

landfall. Thus Amergin called upon the spirit of Ireland itself, chanting a powerful incantation that has come to be known as The Song of Amergin[46] and, eventually (after successfully making landfall), aiding and dividing the land between his royal brothers in the conquest of Ireland,[47][48][49] earning the title Chief Ollam of Ireland.

Other such mythological druids were Tadg mac Nuadat of the Fenian Cycle, and Mug Ruith, a powerful blind druid of Munster.

Female druids

The Druidess, oil on canvas, by French painter Alexandre Cabanel (1823–1890)

Irish mythology

Irish mythology has a number of female druids, often sharing similar prominent cultural and religious roles with their male counterparts. The Irish have several words for female druids, such as bandruí ("woman-druid"), found in tales such as Táin Bó Cúailnge;[50] Bodhmall, featured in the Fenian Cycle, and one of Fionn mac Cumhaill's childhood caretakers;[51] and Tlachtga,[52] daughter of the druid Mug Ruith who, according to Irish tradition, is associated with the Hill of Ward, site of prominent festivals held in Tlachtga's honour during the Middle Ages.[53]

Biróg, another bandruí of the Tuatha Dé Danann, plays a key role in an Irish folktale where the Fomorian warrior Balor attempts to thwart a prophecy foretelling that he would be killed by his own grandson by imprisoning his only daughter Eithne in the tower of Tory Island, away from any contact with men.[54][55] Bé Chuille (daughter of the woodland goddess Flidais, and sometimes described as a sorceress rather than a bandruí) features in a tale from the Metrical Dindshenchas, where she joins three other of the Tuatha Dé to defeat the evil Greek witch Carman.[53][56] Other bandrúi include Relbeo— a Nemedian druid who appears in The Book of Invasions, where she is described as the daughter of the king of Greece, and the mother of Fergus Lethderg[53] and Alma One-Tooth.[57] Dornoll was a bandruí in Scotland, who normally trained heroes in warfare, particularly Laegaire and Conall; she was the daughter of Domnall Mildemail.[53]

The Gallizenae

Location of Île de Sein in the Atlantic Ocean

According to classical authors, the Gallizenae (or Gallisenae) were virgin priestesses of the Île de Sein off Pointe du Raz, Finistère, western Brittany.[58] Their existence was first mentioned by the Greek geographer Artemidorus Ephesius and later by the Greek historian Strabo, who wrote that their island was forbidden to men, but the women came to the mainland to meet their husbands. Which deities they honored is unknown.[59] According to Pomponius Mela, the Gallizenae acted as both councilors and practitioners of the healing arts:

Sena, in the Britannic Sea, opposite the coast of the Osismi, is famous for its oracle of a

Gaulish god, whose priestesses, living in the holiness of perpetual virginity, are said to be nine in number. They call them Gallizenae, and they believe them to be endowed with extraordinary gifts to rouse the sea and the wind by their incantations, to turn themselves into whatsoever animal form they may choose, to cure diseases which among others are incurable, to know what is to come and to foretell it. They are, however, devoted to the service of voyagers only who have set out on no other errand than to consult them.[60][61][62]

Druidesses in Gaul

According to the *Historia Augusta*, Alexander Severus received a prophecy about his death from a Gallic druidess (druidessa).[63] The work also has Aurelian questioning druidesses about the fate of his descendants, to which they answered in favor of Claudius II.[64] Flavius Vopiscus is also quoted as recalling a prophecy received by Diocletian from a druidess of the Tungri.[65]

Sources on druid beliefs and practices

Greek and Roman records

Édouard Zier, "Druids Inciting the Britons to Oppose the Landing of the Romans"—from Cassell's *History of England*, Volume I

The earliest surviving literary evidence of druids emerges from the classical world of Greece and Rome. Archaeologist Stuart Piggott compared the attitude of the Classical authors toward the druids as being similar to the relationship that had existed in the 15th and 18th centuries between Europeans and the societies that they were just encountering in other parts of the world, such as the Americas and the South Sea Islands. He highlighted the attitude of "primitivism" among both Early Modern Europeans and Classical authors, owing to their perception that these newly encountered societies had less technological development and were less advanced in socio-political development.[66]

Historian Nora Chadwick, in a categorization subsequently adopted by Piggott, divided the Classical accounts of the druids into two groups, distinguished by their approach to the subject and their chronological contexts. She calls the first of these groups the "Posidonian" tradition, after one of its primary exponents, Posidonius, and notes that it takes a largely critical attitude towards the Iron Age societies of Western Europe, emphasizing their "barbaric" qualities. The second of these two groups is termed the "Alexandrian" group, being centred on the scholastic traditions of Alexandria, Egypt; she notes that it took a more sympathetic and idealized attitude toward these foreign peoples.[67] Piggott drew parallels between this categorisation and the ideas of "hard primitivism" and "soft primitivism" identified by historians of ideas Arthur Oncken Lovejoy and Franz Boas.[68]

One school of thought holds that all these accounts are inherently unreliable and may be entirely fictional. They have suggested that the druid might have been a fiction created by Classical writers to reinforce the image of the barbaric "other" beyond the

civilized Greco-Roman world, thereby legitimizing the Roman Empire's expansion into these areas.[69]

The earliest record of the druids comes from two Greek texts of c. 300 BCE: a history of philosophy written by Sotion of Alexandria, and a study of magic widely attributed to Aristotle. Both texts are now lost, but are quoted in the 2nd-century CE work *Vitae* by Diogenes Laërtius.[70]

Some say that the study of philosophy originated with the barbarians. In that among the Persians there existed the Magi, and among the Babylonians or Assyrians the Chaldaei, among the Indians the Gymnosophistae, and among the Celts and Gauls men who were called druids and semnothei, as Aristotle relates in his book on magic, and Sotion in the twenty-third book of his *Succession of Philosophers*.

—*Vitae*, Introduction, Section 1[71]

Subsequent Greek and Roman texts from the 3rd century BCE refer to "barbarian philosophers",[72] possibly in reference to the Gaulish druids.

Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar, the Roman general and later dictator, who wrote the most important source for the Druids in Britain

The earliest extant text that describes druids in detail is Julius Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, book VI, written in the 50s or 40s BCE. A general intent on conquering Gaul and Britain, Caesar described the druids as concerned with "divine worship, the due performance of sacrifices, private or public, and the interpretation of ritual questions". He said they played an important part in Gaulish society, being one of the two respected classes, along with the equites (in Rome, the name for members of a privileged class above the common people, but also "horsemen"), and that they served as judges.

Caesar wrote that the druids recognized the authority of a single leader who would rule until his death, after which a successor would be chosen by vote or by conflict. He remarked that to settle disputes between tribes, they met annually at a sacred place at the borders of the Carnutes' territory, which is said to be the centre of Gaul. They viewed Britain as the centre of druidic study, and that they were not found among the German tribes to the east of the Rhine. According to Caesar, many young men were trained to be druids, during which time they had to learn all the associated lore by heart. He also said that their main teaching was "the souls do not perish, but after death pass from one to another". They were concerned with "the stars and their movements, the size of the cosmos and the earth, the world of nature, and the power and might of the immortal gods", indicating they were involved with not only such common aspects of religion as theology and cosmology, but also astronomy. Caesar held that they were "administrators" during rituals of human sacrifice, for which criminals were usually used, and that the method was by burning in a wicker man.[24]

Although he had firsthand experience of the Gaulish people and, by extension, likely of druids, modern historians have widely criticized Caesar's account as inaccurate. One issue raised by such historians as Fustel de Coulanges[73] was that while Caesar described the druids as a significant power within Gaulish society, he did not mention them even once in his accounts of his Gaulish conquests. Nor did Aulus Hirtius, who continued Caesar's account of the Gallic Wars after Caesar's death. Hutton believed that Caesar had manipulated the idea of the druids so they would appear both civilized (being learned and pious) and barbaric (performing human sacrifice) to Roman readers, thereby representing both "a society worth including in the Roman Empire" and one that required civilizing with Roman rule and values, thus justifying his wars of conquest.[74] Sean Dunham suggested that Caesar had simply taken the Roman religious functions of senators and applied them to the druids.[75][76] Daphne Nash believed it "not unlikely" that he "greatly exaggerates" both the centralized system of druidic leadership and its connection to Britain.[77]

Other historians have accepted that Caesar's account might be more accurate. Norman J. DeWitt surmised that Caesar's description of the role of druids in Gaulish society may report an idealized tradition, based on the society of the 2nd century BCE, before the pan-Gallic confederation led by the Arverni was smashed in 121 BCE, followed by the invasions of Teutones and Cimbri, rather than on the demoralized and disunited Gaul of his own time.[78] John Creighton speculated that in Britain, the druidic social influence was already in decline by the mid-1st century BCE, in conflict with emergent new power structures embodied in paramount chieftains.[79] Other scholars see the Roman conquest itself as the main reason for the decline of the druid orders.[80] Archaeologist Miranda Aldhouse-Green (2010) asserted that Caesar offered both "our richest textual source" regarding the druids, and "one of the most reliable". She defended the accuracy of his accounts by highlighting that while he may have embellished some of his accounts to justify Roman imperial conquest, it was "inherently unlikely" that he constructed a fictional class system for Gaul and Britain, particularly considering that he was accompanied by a number of other Roman senators who would have also been sending reports on the conquest to Rome, and who would have challenged his inclusion of serious falsifications.[69]

Cicero, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, and Tacitus

Roman soldiers killing druids and burning their groves on Anglesey, as described by Tacitus

Other classical writers also commented on the druids and their practices. Caesar's contemporary, Cicero, noted that he had met a Gallic druid, Divitiacus, of the Aedui tribe. Divitiacus was supposedly well-versed in the natural world and practiced augury.[2] Whether Divitiacus was genuinely a druid can, however, be disputed, for Caesar also knew this figure, and wrote about him, calling him by the more Gaulish-sounding (and thereby presumably the more authentic) Diviciacus, but never referred to him as a druid and indeed presented him as a political and military leader.[81]

Another classical writer to take up describing the druids not too long afterward was Diodorus Siculus, who published this description in his *Bibliotheca Historica* in 36 BCE. Alongside the druids, or as he called them, *drouidas*, who he believed to be philosophers and theologians, he remarked how there were poets and singers in Celtic society, who he called *bardous*, or *bards*.^[41] Such an idea was expanded upon by Strabo, who, writing in the 20s CE, declared that amongst the Gauls, there were three types of honoured figures:^[82]

the poets and singers known as *bardoi*,
the diviners and specialists in the natural world known as *o'vateis*, and
those who studied "moral philosophy", the *druidai*.

The Roman writer Tacitus, who was himself a senator and historian, described how when the Roman army, led by Suetonius Paulinus, attacked the island of Mona (Anglesey; Welsh: *Ynys Môn*), the legionaries were awestruck on landing, by the appearance of a band of druids, who, with hands uplifted to the sky, poured forth terrible imprecations on the heads of the invaders. He says these "terrified our soldiers who had never seen such a thing before". The courage of the Romans, however, soon overcame such fears, according to the Roman historian; the Britons were put to flight, and the sacred groves of Mona were cut down.^[83] Tacitus is also the only primary source that gives accounts of druids in Britain, but portrays them negatively, as ignorant savages.^[84]

Irish and Welsh records

In the Middle Ages, after Ireland and Wales were Christianized, druids appear in a number of written sources, mainly tales and stories such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, and in the hagiographies of various saints. These were all written by Christian monks.

Irish literature and law codes

In Irish-language literature, druids (*draoithe*, plural of *draoi*) are sorcerers with supernatural powers, who are respected in society, particularly for their ability to do divination. Dictionary of the Irish Language defines a *druí* (which has numerous variant forms, including *draoi*) as a magician, wizard, or diviner.^[85] In the literature, the druids cast spells and turn people into animals or stones, or curse peoples' crops to be blighted.^[86]

When druids are portrayed in early Irish sagas and in saints' lives that are set in pre-Christian Ireland, they are usually given high social status. The evidence of the law-texts, which were first written down in the 600s and 700s CE, suggests that with the coming of Christianity, the role of the druid in Irish society was rapidly reduced to that of a sorcerer who could be consulted to cast spells or do healing magic, and that his standing declined accordingly.^[87] According to the early legal tract *Bretha Crólige*, the sick-maintenance due to a druid, satirist, and brigand (*díberg*) is no more than that which is due to a *bóaire* (an ordinary freeman). Another law-text, *Uraicecht Becc* ('small primer'), gives the druid a place among the *dóer-nemed*, or professional classes, which

depend upon a patron for their status, along with wrights, blacksmiths, and entertainers, as opposed to the fili, who alone enjoyed free nemed-status.[88]

Welsh literature

While druids featured prominently in many medieval Irish sources, they were far rarer in their Welsh counterparts. Unlike the Irish texts, the Welsh term commonly used to refer to the druids, dryw, was used solely to refer to prophets, not to sorcerers or pagan priests. Historian Ronald Hutton noted that there were two explanations for the use of the term in Wales: the first was that it was a survival from the pre-Christian era, when dryw had been ancient priests; the second was that the Welsh had borrowed the term from the Irish, as had the English (who used the terms dry and drycraeft to refer to magicians and magic respectively, most probably influenced by the Irish terms).[89]

Archaeology

lower cup

upper cup

A pair of 1st century BCE(?) "spoons" from England. It is speculated that they were used for divination. Eleven of such pairs have been found.[90] Miranda Green believes that a liquid was put into the spoon with the hole, and allowed to drip into the other spoon below, and then the drip-pattern was interpreted.[91]

As the historian Jane Webster stated, "individual druids ... are unlikely to be identified archaeologically".[92] A. P. Fitzpatrick, in examining what he believed to be astral symbolism on late Iron Age swords, has expressed difficulties in relating any material culture, even the Coligny calendar, with druidic culture.[93]

Nonetheless, some archaeologists have attempted to link certain discoveries with written accounts of the druids. The archaeologist Anne Ross linked what she believed to be evidence of human sacrifice in Celtic pagan society (such as the Lindow Man bog body) to the Greco-Roman accounts of human sacrifice being officiated-over by the druids.[94][95] Miranda Aldhouse-Green— a professor of archaeology at Cardiff University, has noted that Suetonius's army would have passed very near the site while travelling to deal with Boudicca, and postulates that the sacrifice may have been connected.[96] A 1996 discovery of a skeleton that was buried with advanced medical and possibly divinatory equipment has, however, been nicknamed the "Druid of Colchester".

Headdress of the "Deal Warrior", possibly worn by druids, 200–150 BCE, British Museum[97]

An excavated burial in Deal, Kent discovered the "Deal Warrior"— a man who was buried at around 200–150 BCE with a sword and shield, and wearing an almost unique head-band, which is too thin to be part of a leather helmet. The crown is bronze with a broad band around the head, and a thin strip that crosses the top of the head horizontally. Since traces of hair were left on the metal, it must have been worn without any padding beneath it. The form of the headdress resembles depictions of Romano-British priests

from several centuries later, leading to speculation among archaeologists that the man might have been a religious official— a druid.[98]

History of reception

Prohibition and decline under Roman rule

In the Gallic Wars of 58–51 BCE, the Roman army, led by Julius Caesar, conquered the many tribal chiefdoms of Gaul, and annexed it as a part of the Roman Republic.

According to accounts produced in the following centuries, the new rulers of Roman Gaul subsequently introduced measures to wipe out the druids from that country.

According to Pliny the Elder, writing in the 70s CE, it was the emperor Tiberius (ruled 14–37 CE) who introduced laws which banned not only druidic practices, but also other native soothsayers and healers— a move which Pliny applauded, believing that it would end human sacrifice in Gaul.[99] A somewhat different account of Roman legal attacks upon the druids was made by Suetonius, writing in the 2nd century CE, when he stated that Rome's first emperor, Augustus (ruled 27 BCE–14 CE), had decreed that no-one could be both a druid and a Roman citizen, and that this was followed by a law passed by the later emperor Claudius (ruled 41–54 CE) which "thoroughly suppressed" the druids by banning their religious practices.[100]

Possible late survival of Insular druid orders

Further information: Christianization of Ireland, Christianization of Wales, and Taliesin

The best evidence of a druidic tradition in the British Isles is the independent cognate of the Celtic *druwid- in Insular Celtic: The Old Irish *drúidecht* survives in the meaning of 'magic', and the Welsh *dryw* in the meaning of 'seer'.

While the druids as a priestly caste were extinct with the Christianization of Wales, complete by the 7th century at the latest, the offices of bard and of "seer" (Welsh: *dryw*) persisted in medieval Wales into the 13th century.

Minister Macauley (1764) reported the existence of five druidic altars, including a large circle of stones fixed perpendicularly in the ground near the Stallir House on Boreray near the westernmost settlement of the UK St. Kilda.[101]

Classics professor Phillip Freeman discusses a later reference to 'dryades', which he translates as 'druidesses', writing, "The fourth century CE collection of imperial biographies known as the *Historia Augusta* contains three short passages involving Gaulish women called 'dryades' ('druidesses'). He points out that "In all of these, the women may not be direct heirs of the druids who were supposedly extinguished by the Romans – but in any case they do show that the druidic function of prophecy continued among the natives in Roman Gaul." [102] Additionally, female druids are mentioned in later Irish mythology, including the legend of Fionn mac Cumhaill, who, according to the 12th century *The Boyhood Deeds of Fionn*, is raised by the woman druid Bodhmall and her companion, another wise-woman.[52][51]

Christian historiography and hagiography

The story of Vortigern, as reported by Nennius, gives one of the very few glimpses of possible druidic survival in Britain after the Roman arrival. He wrote that after being excommunicated by Germanus of Auxerre, the British leader Vortigern invited twelve druids to help him.

In the lives of saints and martyrs, the druids are represented as magicians and diviners. In Adamnan's vita of Columba, two of them act as tutors to the daughters of Lóegaire mac Néill, the High King of Ireland, at the coming of Saint Patrick. They are represented as endeavouring to prevent the progress of Patrick and Saint Columba by raising clouds and mist. Before the battle of Culdremne (561 CE), a druid made an *airbe drtiad* ("fence of protection"?) around one of the armies, but what is precisely meant by that phrase is unclear. The Irish druids seem to have had a peculiar tonsure. The word *druí* is always used to render the Latin word *magus*, and in one passage, St Columba speaks of Jesus as his druid. Similarly, a life of Saint Beuno states that when he died, he had a vision of "all the saints and druids." [103]

Sulpicius Severus' vita of Martin of Tours relates how Martin encountered a peasant funeral, carrying the body in a winding sheet, which Martin mistook for some druidic rites of sacrifice, "because it was the custom of the Gallic rustics in their wretched folly to carry about through the fields the images of demons veiled with a white covering". So Martin halted the procession by raising his pectoral cross: "Upon this, the miserable creatures might have been seen at first to become stiff like rocks. Next, as they endeavoured, with every possible effort, to move forward, but were not able to take a step farther, they began to whirl themselves about in the most ridiculous fashion, until, not able any longer to sustain the weight, they set down the dead body." Then discovering his error, Martin raised his hand again to let them proceed: "Thus", the hagiographer points out, "he both compelled them to stand when he pleased, and permitted them to depart when he thought good." [104]

Later revivals

Main articles: Celtic revival and Neo-Druidism

Druid statue in Croome Court, Malvern Hills, Worcestershire

From the 18th century, England and Wales saw a revival of interest in the druids. John Aubrey (1626–1697) had been the first modern writer to (incorrectly) connect Stonehenge and other megalithic monuments with the druids. Since Aubrey's theory was confined to his notebooks, the first wide audience for this idea were readers of William Stukeley (1687–1765). [105] It is incorrectly believed that John Toland (1670–1722) founded the Ancient Druid Order; however, the research of historian Ronald Hutton has revealed that the ADO was founded by George Watson MacGregor Reid in 1909. [106] The order never used (and still does not use) the title "Archdruid" for any member, but falsely credited William Blake as having been its "Chosen Chief" from 1799–1827, without corroboration in Blake's numerous writings or among modern Blake scholars. Blake's bardic mysticism derives instead from the pseudo-Ossianic epics of Macpherson; his friend Frederick Tatham's depiction of Blake's imagination, "clothing

itself in the dark stole of moral sanctity"— in the precincts of Westminster Abbey— "it dwelt amid the druid terrors", is generic rather than specifically neo-druidic.[107] John Toland was fascinated by Aubrey's Stonehenge theories, and wrote his own book about the monument without crediting Aubrey. The roles of bards in 10th century Wales had been established by Hywel Dda and it was during the 18th century that the idea arose that druids had been their predecessors.[108]

The 19th century idea, gained from uncritical reading of the Gallic Wars, that under cultural-military pressure from Rome the druids formed the core of 1st century BCE resistance among the Gauls, was examined and dismissed before World War II,[109] though it remains current in folk history.

Druids began to figure widely in popular culture with the first advent of Romanticism. Chateaubriand's novel *Les Martyrs* (1809) narrated the doomed love of a druid priestess and a Roman soldier; though Chateaubriand's theme was the triumph of Christianity over pagan druids, the setting was to continue to bear fruit. Opera provides a barometer of well-informed popular European culture in the early 19th century: In 1817 Giovanni Pacini brought druids to the stage in Trieste with an opera to a libretto by Felice Romani about a druid priestess, *La Sacerdotessa d'Irminsul* ("The Priestess of Irminsul"). Vincenzo Bellini's druidic opera, *Norma* was a fiasco at La Scala, when it premiered the day after Christmas, 1831; but in 1833 it was a hit in London. For its libretto, Felice Romani reused some of the pseudo-druidical background of *La Sacerdotessa* to provide colour to a standard theatrical conflict of love and duty. The story was similar to that of *Medea*, as it had recently been recast for a popular Parisian play by Alexandre Soumet: the chaste goddess (*casta diva*) addressed in *Norma*'s hit aria is the moon goddess, worshipped in the "grove of the Irmin statue".

Edward Williams, known for his bardic name, "Iolo Morganwg" A central figure in 19th century Romanticist, Neo-druid revival, is Welshman Edward Williams, better known as Iolo Morganwg. His writings, published posthumously as *The Iolo Manuscripts* (1849) and *Barddas* (1862), are not considered credible by contemporary scholars. Williams said that he had collected ancient knowledge in a "Gorsedd of Bards of the Isles of Britain" he had organized. While bits and pieces of the *Barddas* still turn up in some "Neo-Druidic" works, the documents are not considered relevant to ancient practice by most scholars.

Another Welshman, William Price (4 March 1800 – 23 January 1893), a physician known for his support of Welsh nationalism, Chartism, and his involvement with the Neo-Druidic religious movement, has been recognized as a significant figure of 19th century Wales. He was arrested for cremating his deceased son, a practice he believed to be a druid ritual, but won his case; this in turn led to the Cremation Act 1902.[110] [111][112]

In 1927 T. D. Kendrick sought to dispel the pseudo-historical aura that had accrued to

druids,[113] asserting, "a prodigious amount of rubbish has been written about Druidism";[114] Neo-druidism has nevertheless continued to shape public perceptions of the historical druids.

Some strands of contemporary Neo-Druidism are a continuation of the 18th century revival and thus are built largely around writings produced in the 18th century and after by second-hand sources and theorists. Some are monotheistic. Others, such as the largest druid group in the world, the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, draw on a wide range of sources for their teachings. Members of such Neo-Druid groups may be Neopagan, occultist, Christian or non-specifically spiritual.

Modern scholarship

Druidic ceremony for the Autumn Equinox on top of Primrose Hill in London
In the 20th century, as new forms of textual criticism and archaeological methods were developed, allowing for greater accuracy in understanding the past, various historians and archaeologists published books on the subject of the druids, and came to their own conclusions. Archaeologist Stuart Piggott, the author of *The Druids* (1968), accepted the Greco-Roman accounts, and considered the druids to be a barbaric and savage priesthood who performed human sacrifices.[115] This conclusion was largely supported by another archaeologist, Anne Ross, the author of *Pagan Celtic Britain* (1967) and *The Life and Death of a Druid Prince* (1989), though she believed that they were essentially tribal priests, having more in common with the shamans of tribal societies than with the classical philosophers.[116] Ross' conclusion was largely accepted by two other prominent archaeologists to write on the subject: Miranda Aldhouse-Green,[117] the author of *The Gods of the Celts* (1986), *Exploring the World of the Druids* (1997), and *Caesar's Druids: Story of an Ancient Priesthood* (2010); and Barry Cunliffe, the author of *Iron Age Communities in Britain* (1991) and *The Ancient Celts* (1997).[118]

See also

List of druids and neo-druids

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Mystery School Teachings (Eleusinian, Orphic, Mithraic) offered secret, transformative initiations in the Greco-Roman world, promising spiritual enlightenment and a better afterlife through dramatic rituals, symbolic knowledge, and moral purification, centered on deities like Demeter & Persephone (Eleusinian), the mythic Orpheus (Orphic), and the god Mithras (Mithraic). Key themes included death/rebirth cycles, union with the divine, secret knowledge (esoteric), asceticism, and initiation grades, appealing to those seeking personal salvation beyond state religions, notes [Fiveable](#) and [worldhistory.org](#).

[Eleusinian Mysteries \(Greece\)](#)

Focus: Goddesses Demeter & Kore (Persephone), tied to grain, fertility, and the underworld myth.

Teachings: Hope for a blessed afterlife, symbolic rebirth, and relief from fear of death.

Rituals: Two stages (Lesser & Greater Mysteries) with dramatic reenactments of Persephone's journey.

[Orphic Mysteries \(Greece\)](#)

Focus: Orpheus, the mythical musician who journeyed to the underworld.

Teachings: Soul purification (metempsychosis/reincarnation), asceticism (abstinence)

from meat/wine), liberation of the divine soul from the body.

Practices: Secret writings (rhapsodies), purification, and a focus on the afterlife.

Mithraic Mysteries (Roman Empire)

Focus: The god Mithras, popular among Roman soldiers.

Teachings: Astronomical knowledge, cosmic union, and spiritual progress.

Rituals: Seven grades of initiation with trials, performed in underground temples (Mithraea).

Common Characteristics of Mystery Schools

Secrecy: Rituals and specific teachings were kept hidden from non-initiates (mystai).

Initiation: Gradual progression through symbolic stages or grades.

Promise: A transformative experience, personal salvation, and a favorable afterlife.

Inclusivity: Often open to women, foreigners, and slaves, unlike state cults.

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Eleusinian Mysteries

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Ancient Mystery Schools

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Eleusinian, Orphic, and Mithraic refer to prominent ancient Greco-Roman mystery cults, secret religious societies offering personal salvation and afterlife promises through initiation, contrasting with public polytheism by providing deeper spiritual experiences, often focusing on themes of death, rebirth, and divine union, using symbolic rituals and esoteric knowledge, with the Eleusinian Mysteries centered on Demeter/Persephone, Orphism on Dionysus/ Orpheus, and Mithraism on the Persian god Mithras.

Eleusinian Mysteries

Focus: Demeter (goddess of agriculture) & Persephone (her daughter, abducted by Hades).

Key Theme: The cycle of death and rebirth, symbolized by Persephone's descent and return from the underworld, promising initiates a blessed afterlife.

Rituals: Annual 10-day festival with processions, purification, sacrifices, and consumption of a sacred drink (kykeon), possibly containing hallucinogens, leading to profound, secret revelations.

Accessibility: Open to all, regardless of status, but required initiation.

Orphic Mysteries

Focus: Dionysus (Zagreus) and the mythical poet Orpheus.

Key Theme: Humanity's dual nature (divine soul trapped in a Titanic body); salvation through purification to escape reincarnation.

Practices: Asceticism, vegetarianism, strict moral code, and ritual purification (teletē) to relive Dionysus's suffering.

Legacy: Heavily influenced Greek philosophy and mystery cults, including Eleusis.

Mithraic Mysteries (Mithraism)

Focus: The god Mithras, imported from Persia.

Key Theme: Loyalty, cosmic order, and a structured path to spiritual ascent through seven degrees of initiation.

Practices: Met in underground temples (Mithraea), involved ritual meals, feasting, and reenacting scenes like Mithras slaying a bull (tauroctony).

Followers: Extremely popular among Roman soldiers and men.

Commonalities & Significance

Promise: All offered personal salvation, a better afterlife, and answers to existential questions, unlike traditional Greek religion.

Secrecy: Kept core rituals and teachings hidden (esoteric) from the uninitiated (the uninitiated, or amyētos).

Influence: Shaped philosophical thought and provided transformative, life-changing spiritual experiences for individuals.

Eleusinian Mysteries - Wikipedia

The Eleusinian Mysteries (Greek: Ἐλευσίνια Μυστήρια, romanized: Eleusínia Mystéria) were initiations held every year for the cult ...

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Mystery cults - NovaRoma

Sep 25, 2023 — For this reason, what evidence remains of the older Greek mysteries has been understood as reflecting certain archaic ...

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Orphism | Overview, Religion & Beliefs - Study.com

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Comparative Analysis of Greek Mystery Cults

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The Emerald Tablet, also known as the Smaragdine Table or the Tabula Smaragdina, is a compact and cryptic text traditionally attributed to the legendary Hellenistic figure Hermes Trismegistus. [Wikipedia](#)

Original language: Arabic

Authenticity: pseudepigraphical

Date: late 8th or early 9th century CE (earliest Arabic recension)

State of existence: extant in various medieval manuscripts

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The Amduat

Rather than containing passwords or spells, these books provide descriptions and images of the underworld. The Amduat focuses on the journey of the sun god through the twelve regions of the underworld. Each region corresponds to an 'hour' of the night.

Funerary texts in ancient Egypt - The Australian Museum

Australian Museum

<https://australian.museum> › international-collection › fu...

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Book of the Dead: Becoming God in Ancient Egypt

The University of Chicago

<https://oi-idb-static.uchicago.edu> › oimp39

PDF

Oct 3, 2017 — Netherworld books such as the Amduat,. Books of the Earth, and Books of the Sky dominated their tombs. It was only after the Amarna interlude.

377 pages

Knowledge for the Afterlife: The Egyptian Amduat - A Quest ...

Amazon.com

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Book of the Dead

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_the_Dead

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List of Book of the Dead spells

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Journey through the ancient Egyptian Amduat, a sacred text guiding the sun god and souls through the 12 hours of the night.

S01E02 The Ancient Egyptian Afterlife

YouTube · Chris Naunton

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YouTube · Chris Naunton

42:54

Ancient Egyptians believed in an afterlife where they would dwell in an eternal paradise. They prepared for this by mummifying their bodies and placing them in tombs with grave goods.

Fate & Fabled | The Book of the Dead May Not Be What You ...

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Living Human Heritage Publications

<https://www.livinghumanheritage.org> › ...

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The Book of Gates: Ancient Egyptian Funerary Text

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Book of Gates and the Amduat (WikiPedia) The Book of Gates (New Kingdom) is long and detailed, consisting of one hundred scenes.

Egyptian Book of the Dead: literary and philosophical value?

Historum | History Forum

<https://historum.com> › ... › African History

Aug 16, 2019 — According to the Amduat, at the moment of this dying/being swallowed begins for the sun god the 12-hour journey through the Duat, which is full ...

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Runes in Norse magick are the ancient Germanic alphabet used not just for writing but as powerful tools for divination, healing, protection, and casting spells, involving carving them into objects or chanting their names (galdr), tapping into cosmic forces and invoking deities for practical purposes like curing illness or warding off harm, though most historical inscriptions were mundane, with magical uses often involving specific formulas or repeated runes.

[How Runes Were Used in Norse Magick](#)

Divination: Similar to how Tacitus described Germanic peoples casting carved sticks (runes) to read patterns, Vikings used them for prophecy and foretelling.

Galdr (Chanting): Singing or chanting the runes' names and sounds to cast spells.

Bind Runes: Combining individual runes into a single symbol for specific magical intent, a practice seen on amulets and charms.

Amulets & Charms: Carving runes on objects for protection, healing (like the Nud rune repeated nine times), love, or to curse enemies.

Spells & Formulas: Writing out conjurations, blessings (like Thor's protection), or warnings (like on rune stones).

[Key Concepts](#)

"Rune" Meaning: The word means "secret" or "mystery," referring to the signs, secret skills, and magical formulas.

Purpose: To connect with divine powers, shape reality, and influence fate, distinct from mere writing.

Examples: Egil Skallagrimsson used runes to heal a poisoned girl; other charms

mention "nine needs" or invoke gods for protection.

Modern vs. Historical Use

Modern: Often focuses on individual runes representing concepts like love or strength, which isn't historically accurate.

Historical: Focused on specific formulas, contextual meanings, and the power of the written word/chant, not just single letters as magical symbols.

Runic Magic : r/norsemythology - Reddit

Feb 14, 2020 — Comments Section * Freyjugratr. • 6y ago. Rune magic was usually just writing out spells in runes for example on an am...

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Runic magic - National Museum of Denmark

According to the sagas, runic inscriptions held magical powers. With the aid of inscriptions, you could predict the future, protec...

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Runic magic

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Runic_magic

Runes historically served purposes of magic. This is the case from the earliest epigraphic evidence of the Roman to the Germanic Iron Age.

Historical evidence

Epigraphy

Medieval sources

Modern systems

People also ask

Did Vikings use runes for magic?

What do runes mean in Norse magic?

Are runes related to witchcraft?

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A Beginner's Guide to Ancient Runes and Rune Magic

Reddit · r/Norse

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This guide provides basic answers to the following questions: What are runes? Historical rune magic is a thing. In Old Norse áss is masculine ...

What types of Elder Futhark rune magic are there? : r/Norse

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Norse magick, ,seiðr, runes

Popular comment · Best bet for this info is to pop over to r/NorsePaganism and ask there - one of the mods has an excellent rune rundown post that'll have some very helpful links on that front. As for the seiðr itself, that might be an issue. We lost the old practice entirely, and at best we are patch and spackling it from modern witchcraft traditions. There is a modern version going 'round but it may not bear much resemblance to the original seiðr.

.

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The Runes are a closed practice. Not because a human gatekeeps them, but because the Gods themselves do. You must be vetted, tested and accepted onto the runic path. That is how I was taught by my runic mentor, and through my own experience I have seen that this power (which can heal just as easily as it can destroy) is NOT for everyone. To give someone unready the knowledge of the runes, is like handing a toddler a loaded gun. This is not poetic exaggeration, it is the truth and our ancestors understood this. The runes are also not “just an alphabet.” They are the cosmic code that underpins reality itself - the vibrational architecture through which fate, magic and being are woven. Odin sacrificed himself upon Yggdrasil to win them, and through the runes we touch the raw fabric of creation. This is why discernment is essential. Be very cautious of people online teaching runes casually, posting rune formulas, bindrunes, “quick spells,” or treating them like aesthetic symbols

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How to Use Fehu: Accelerate transitions. Use it after “thematic” runes in your runescript to move things to a new stage. Increase wealth. Material growth, possessions. Energy transmission. Send your energy or rune energy into creative, productive areas. In my store, you’ll find handcrafted rune sets, rune boxes, and all kinds of Norse pagan tools for divination, spellwork, and sacred practice. Perfect for your altar, meditation, or magical workings. Explore the magic of runes, connect with the Norse pantheon, and bring a piece of ancient wisdom into your modern pagan practice. . #pagan #norsemithology #norse gods #runes #rune #heathen
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This image depicts the runes of the Elder Futhark, the sacred alphabet used by Germanic and Norse peoples as a tool for writing, divination, and magical power. Each symbol is not just a letter, but an energetic archetype embodying a universal principle, a teaching, and a force of nature. For example, Fehu represents wealth and prosperity, Ansuz is linked to the gods and inspired speech, while Raido signifies the journey, both physical and spiritual. The runes, therefore, were not simply characters, but true keys to the invisible laws that govern the cosmos. In the esoteric and alchemical context, they are seen as instruments of inner transformation: their meditation and ritual use make it possible to awaken latent powers, shape destiny, and understand the subtle correspondences between the microcosm and the macrocosm. Many ancient alchemists and magicians used runes in talismans, carvings on stone or metal, and in rituals to invoke protection, healing, or spiritual illumination. To kn
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How Runes Were Actually Used for Magic: Sources ...
YouTube · Norse Magic and Beliefs
May 10, 2024
YouTube · Norse Magic and Beliefs

18:31

I'm here to be showing you the sources that we have in the old sagas but also the

archaeological finds showing when and how runes exactly were used for magic.

Runic Magick: How to use the runes in spellwork || THE ...

YouTube · The Norse Witch

Feb 8, 2023

YouTube · The Norse Witch

21:13

I will show you how you can use the runes to make magical inscriptions in a more easy and basic way.

(Real, Historical) Rune Spells

YouTube · Jackson Crawford

Dec 30, 2020

YouTube · Jackson Crawford

20:11

I want to talk to you about some descriptions that actually have rock and roll mysterious meanings.

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Viking Rune Magic

Norse Tradesman

<https://norsetradesman.com> › blogs › news › viking-run...

Vikings thought that runes were magic. Sometimes, rune carvers wrote abbreviations or codes. Modern rune fans like to call these 'cryptic' runes.

Runer og magi

Avaldsnes

<https://avaldsnes.info> › viking › lorem-ipsum

Runes are woven into Norse religion and are closely associated with Norse magic (seiðr) and skaldic poetry. The runes were not invented.

Runic magic - National Museum of Denmark

National Museum of Denmark

<https://en.natmus.dk> › religion-magic-death-and-rituals

The runic staff or wand was waved at the person, who its user wished to “catch”.

According to medieval ballads, it was possible to seduce a woman using runes.

The Runes - Magic

Fehu Crafts

<https://fehucrafts.se> › The Runes

In my role as a Norse Priestess, the runes are a big part of my life – and not least from a magical perspective. Learning about the runes as a writing system ...

Norse Magic & Runes: A Guide To The Magic, Rituals ...

Amazon.com

<https://www.amazon.com> › Norse-Magic-Runes-Meanin...

Runes & Norse Magic are used as a method of connecting to one's higher self. Or as a way of foretelling what the future may hold.

30-day returns

Magick of the Runes — Briona Jolie

Briona Jolie

<https://www.brionajolie.com> › blog › the-magick-of-the...

Jan 15, 2023 — Runes are the trusted ally of the magick worker, the shaman, the soul on a quest. They have provided me great comfort, insight, and support in my journey.

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From the Benefits of Dhikr - Islam TeesIslam Tees

Dhikr (or Zikr) is a fundamental Islamic practice of remembering, glorifying, and praising Allah through the repeated recitation of specific prayers, phrases (like SubhanAllah, Alhamdulillah, Allahu Akbar), or verses from the Quran, often done with intention, focus, and sometimes prescribed movements or breath, central to both general worship and Sufi mysticism for spiritual closeness to God.

Key Aspects of Dhikr:

Meaning: From the Arabic word dhakara, meaning "to remember," "to mention," or "to recite".

Purpose: To keep God constantly in one's mind, glorify Him, seek spiritual perfection, and feel His presence.

Forms: Can be silent or aloud, solitary or communal, using short phrases or longer supplications, often counted on fingers or prayer beads (tasbeeh).

Quranic Basis: Commands from the Quran encourage frequent remembrance, such as "Remember Allah with much remembrance" (33:41).

Sufi Practice: A core spiritual discipline in Sufism (Islamic mysticism) to achieve spiritual states, with specific orders having unique dhikr practices.

Examples of Dhikr Phrases:

La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god but God)

Allahu Akbar (God is greatest)

Alhamdulillah (Praise be to God)

SubhanAllah (Glory be to God)

Astaghfirullah (I seek God's forgiveness)

How it's Performed:

Mindfulness: Focusing on the meaning, not just the words, and feeling God's presence.

Consistency: Doing it regularly, even in small amounts.

Etiquette: Can involve a calm setting, reflection, and using the right hand for counting.

DHIKR Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster

Dhikr has multiple meanings: * **Ritual formula** A Sufi brotherhood recites this formula devotionally in praise of Allah. It's al...

Merriam-Webster

Dhikr | Meaning, Islam, & Practice - Britannica

dhikr, ritual prayer or litany practiced by Muslim mystics (Sufis) for the purpose of glorifying God and achieving spiritual perfe...

Britannica

What Dhikr has the most reward? : r/islam - Reddit
he will have a reward equivalent to that for emancipating ten slaves, a hundred good deeds will be recorded to his credit, hundred...

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Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhikr>

a form of Islamic worship in which phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited for the purpose of remembering God.

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What are the different types of dhikr?

Role in Sufism

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What is the role of dhikr in Sufism?

Origin

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What is the origin of dhikr?

Dhikr & Du'a

Life With Allah

<https://lifewithallah.com/dhikr-dua>

A beautiful app with a stunning modern design to help you read dhikr and duas on a daily basis and on key occasions. The app is totally FREE with NO annoying ...

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phrases to Allah. You can repeat them throughout your hour ...
71 answers

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Here is a list of powerful dhikr with immense rewards. This is based of hadith from either ...

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4 answers

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What is the importance of Dhikr

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Apr 27, 2014

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10 Easy Dhikr Phrases Every Muslim Should Know

Grounded Revival

<https://www.grounded-revival.com> › blogs › 10-easy-d...

Dec 12, 2024 — 10 Easy Dhikr Phrases Every Muslim Should Know · "Glory be to Allah." · "All praise is due to Allah." · "Allah is the Greatest." · "There is no ...

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When you remember Allah he remembers you and when Allah remembers you he will open doors of opportunities you never imagined.

What Doing Dhikr Actually Means (Allah's Definition ...

YouTube · Nouman Ali Khan - Official - Bayyinah

Jun 28, 2025

YouTube · Nouman Ali Khan - Official - Bayyinah

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YouTube · Islam The Ultimate Peace

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Dhikr involves short phrases of remembrance of Allah, often recommended by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) for spiritual rewards. These are among the most virtuous, such as those recited morning and evening or for forgiveness #dhikr #charity #W

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Nov 8, 2021 — Dhikr meaning in Islam is to remember God using short sentences that contain the names of Allah and/or supplications from the Qur'an or hadith ...
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How to Do Dhikr

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The purpose of dhikr is to remember Allah with the presence of the heart. It is extremely important that every person aims for this and strives to achieve it.
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Dhikr is a form of Islamic worship in which phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited for the purpose of remembering God. It plays a central role in Sufism, and each Sufi order typically adopts a specific dhikr, accompanied by specific posture, breathing, and movement.

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The Dhikr, Eugène Baugnies (1841–1891)

Dhikr (Arabic: ذِكْر;[a] Arabic pronunciation: [ðikr]; lit. 'remembrance, reminder,[4] mention[5]') is a form of Islamic worship in which phrases or prayers are repeatedly recited for the purpose of remembering God.[4][6] It plays a central role in Sufism,[7] and each Sufi order typically adopts a specific dhikr, accompanied by specific posture, breathing, and movement.[8] In Sufism, dhikr refers to both the act of this remembrance as well as the prayers used in these acts of remembrance.[4] Dhikr usually includes the names of God or supplication from the Quran or hadith. It may be counted with either one's fingers or prayer beads,[4] and may be performed alone or with a collective group.[8] A person who recites dhikr is called a dhākir (ذَّاكِر; [ðaːkɪr]; lit. 'rememberer').[5]

The Quran frequently refers to itself and other scriptures and prophetic messages as "reminders" (dhikrah, tadhkīrah), which is understood as a call to "remember" (dhikr) an innate knowledge of God humans already possess. The Quran uses the term dhikr to denote the reminder from God conveyed through the prophets and messengers, as well as the human response to that reminder, signifying a reciprocal interaction between the divine and human. Muslims believe the prophets deliver God's message as a reminder to humans, who, in turn, should remember and acknowledge it.[9]

Importance

Several verses in the Quran emphasize the importance of remembering the will of God by saying phrases such as "God willing" "God knows best," and "If it is your will." This is the basis for dhikr. Surah al-Kahf (18), Ayah 24 states a person who forgets to say, "God willing", should immediately remember God by saying, "Maybe my Lord will guide me to [something] more akin to rectitude than this." [10] Other verses include Surah al-Ahzab (33), Ayah 41, "O you who have faith! Remember Allah with frequent remembrance", [11] and Surah ar-Ra'd (13), Ayah 28, "those who have faith, and whose hearts find rest in the remembrance of Allah. Look! The hearts find rest in Allah's remembrance!" [12]

Sufi dhikr most commonly involves the repetition of the Names of Allah. This practice is central to Sufi spiritual exercises and is intended to foster a deeper connection with the Divine. The Names of Allah, also known as Asma'ul Husna, represent various attributes of God, such as "Ar-Rahman" (The Most Merciful) and "Al-Karim" (The Generous). By invoking these names, practitioners aim to internalize the qualities they represent, cultivate a state of spiritual purity, and draw closer to God. The repetitive nature of dhikr helps to quiet the mind, focus the heart, and create a sense of inner peace and presence. To Sufis, dhikr is seen as a way to gain spiritual enlightenment and achieve annihilation of self (fana) to seek permanence in God. [13] All Muslim sects endorse

individual rosaries as a method dhikr and meditation, the goal of which is to obtain a feeling of peace, separation from worldly values (dunya), and, in general, strengthen Iman (faith). The main purpose of dhikr is to fill the heart with spiritual meaning and not simply chant the invocations with an empty heart and absent mind. When performed with awareness, the heart then becomes receptive to the activity of the tongue and is aware of God's presence.[14]

Common types [15]

Arabic

Qur'anic spelling Transliteration

IPA Phrase

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ bismi -llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīmi

/bis.mil.laː.hir.raḥ.maː.ni.r.ra.ḥiː.mi/ In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Especially-Merciful.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ 'a'ūdū bi-llāhi mina š-šayṭāni r-rajīmi

/ʔa.ʕuː.ðu bil.laː.hi mi.naʃ.ʃaj.tʃaː.nir.ra.dʒiː.mi/ I seek refuge in God from the exiled Satan.

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ السَّمِيعِ الْعَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ 'a'ūdū bi-llāhi s-samī'i l-'alīmi mina š-šayṭāni r-rajīmi

/ʔa.ʕuː.ðu bil.laː.hiʃ.sa.miː.ʕil.ʕa.liː.mi mi.naʃ.ʃaj.tʃaː.nir.ra.dʒiː.mi/ I seek refuge in God, the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, from the exiled Satan.

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ subḥāna -llāhi

/sub.ḥaː.naʃ.ʃaː.hi/ Glorified is God.

لِلَّحَمْدِ لِلَّهِ 'alḥamdu lillāhi

/ʔal.ḥam.du lil.laː.hi/ Praise is due to God.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ lā 'ilāha 'illā -llāhu

/laː.ʔi.laː.ha ʔil.laʃ.ʃaː.hu/ There is no deity but God.

لِلَّهِ أَكْبَرُ 'allāhu 'akbaru

/ʔaʃ.ʃaː.hu ʔak.ba.ru/ God is greater [than everything].

أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللَّهَ 'astaḡfiru -llāha

/ʔas.tay.fi.ruʃ.ʃaː.ha/ I seek the forgiveness of God.

أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ يَا رَبِّ 'astaḡfiru -llāha rabbī wa-'atūbu 'ilayhi

/ʔas.tay.fi.ruʃ.ʃaː.ha rab.biː wa.ʔa.tuː.bu ʔi.laj.hi/ I seek the forgiveness of God, my Lord, and repent to Him.

سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ subḥānaka -llāhumma

/sub.ḥaː.na.kəʃ.ʃaː.hum.ma/ Glorified are you, O God.

لِلَّهِ وَبِحَمْدِهِ subḥāna -llāhi wa-bi-ḥamdiḥi

/sub.ḥaː.naʃ.ʃaː.hi wa.bi.ḥam.di.hiː/ Glorified is God and with His praise.

لِعَظِيمِ رَبِّي subḥāna rabbiya l-'aẓīmi wa-bi-ḥamdiḥi

/sub.ḥaː.na rab.bi.jal.ʕa.ðʕiː.mi wa.bi.ḥam.di.hiː/ Glorified is my God, the Great, and with His praise.

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّيَ ۖ لَا أَعْلَىٰ وَحَمْدِهِ subḥāna rabbiya l-'a'lā wa-bi-ḥamdiḥi

/sub.ħa:.na rab.bi.jaḷ.ʔaʕ.la: wa.bi.ħam.di.hi:/ Glorified is my God, the Most High, and with His praise.

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۚ الْعَلِيُّ ۚ الْعَظِيمُ lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata 'illā bi-llāhi l-'alīyi l-'aẓīmi

/la: ħaw.la wa.la: quw.wa.ta ʔil.la: bil.la: .hiḷ.ʕa.li:.jil.ʕa.ðʕi:.mi/ There is no power no strength except from God, the Exalted, the Great.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ lā 'ilāha 'illā 'anta subḥānaka 'innī kuntu mina ḡ-ẓālimīna

/la: ʔi.la:.ha ʔil.la: ʔan.ta sub.ħa:.na.ka ʔin.ni: kun.tu mi.naðʕ.ðʕa:.li.mi:.na/ There is no god except You, glorified are you! I have indeed been among the wrongdoers.

حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ ḥasbunā -llāhu wa-ni'ma l-wakīlu

/ħas.bu.naḷ.ħa:.hu wa.niʕ.maḷ.wa.ki:.lu/ God is sufficient for us, and He is an excellent Trustee.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ 'innā lillāhi wa-'innā 'ilayhi rāji'ūna

/ʔin.na: lil.la:.hi wa.ʔin.na: ʔi.laj.hi ra:.dʒi.ʕu:.na/ Verily we belong to God, and verily to Him do we return.

مَا شَاءَ ۖ اللَّهُ كَانَ وَمَا لَمْ يَشَأْ لَمْ يَكُنْ mā šā'a -llāhu kāna wa-mā lam yaša' lam yakun

/ma: ʕa:ʔaḷ.ħa:.hu ka:.na wa.ma: lam ja.ʕa? lam ja.kun/ What God wills will be, and what God does not will, will not be.

إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ 'in šā'a -llāhu

/ʔin ʕa:ʔaḷ.ħa:.hu/ If God wills.

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ mā šā'a -llāhu

/ma: ʕa:ʔaḷ.ħa:.hu/ What God wills.

بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ bi-'idni -llāhi

/bi.ʔið.nil.la:.hi/ With the permission of God.

جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا jazāka -llāhu khayrān

/dʒa.za:.kaḷ.ħa:.hu xaj.ran/ God reward you [with] goodness.

لِلَّهِ فِكَ ۖ لِلَّهِ بَارَكَ -llāhu fika

/ba:ra.kaḷ.ħa:.hu fi:.ka/ God bless you.

فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ fī sabīli -llāhi

/fi: ʕa.bi:.lil.la:.hi/ On the path of God.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ lā 'ilāha 'illā -llāhu muḥammadun rasūlu -llāhi

/la: ʔi.la:.ha ʔil.laḷ.ħa:.hu mu.ħam.ma.dun ra.su:.luḷ.ħa:.hi/ There is no deity but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ 'alīyun walīyu -llāhi lā 'ilāha 'illā -llāhu muḥammadun rasūlu -llāhi

/la: ʔi.la:.ha ʔil.laḷ.ħa:.hu mu.ħam.ma.dun ra.su:.luḷ.ħa:.hi ʕa.li:.jun wa.li:.juḷ.ħa:.hi/ There is no deity but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God, Ali is the vicegerent of God.

(Usually recited by Shia Muslims)

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ 'ašhadu 'an lā 'ilāha 'illā -llāhu wa-'ašhadu

'anna muḥammadan rasūlu -llāhi

/ʔaʕ.ha.du ʔan la: ʔi.la:.ha ʔil.laḷ.ħa:.hu wa.ʔaʕ.ha.du ʔan.na mu.ħam.ma.dan

ra.su:.luḷ.ħa:.hi/ I bear witness that there is no deity but God, and I bear witness that

Muhammad is the messenger of God.

أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ عَلِيًّا وَلِيُّ اللَّهِ
'ašhadu 'an lā 'ilāha 'illā
-llāhu wa-'ašhadu 'anna muḥammadan rasūlu -llāhi wa-'ašhadu 'anna 'alīyan walīyu
-llāhi

/ʔaʃ.ha.du ʔan la: ʔi.la:.ha ʔil.laʃ.ʔa:.hu wa.ʔaʃ.ha.du ʔan.na mu.ḥam.ma.dan
ra.su:.luʃ.ʔa:.hi wa.ʔaʃ.ha.du ʔan.na ʕa.li:.jan wa.li:.juʃ.ʔa:.hi/ I bear witness that there is
no deity but God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God, and I
bear witness that Ali is the vicegerent of God. (Usually recited by Shia Muslims)

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ
'allāhumma ṣalli 'alā muḥammadin wa-'ālī
muḥammadin

/ʔaʃ.ʔa:.hum.ma sʕal.li ʕa.la: mu.ḥam.ma.din wa.ʔa:.li mu.ḥam.ma.din/ O God, bless
Muhammad and the Progeny of Muhammad.

اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَجِّلْ فَرَجَهُمْ وَاعْنِ اَعْدَاءَهُمْ
'allāhumma ṣalli 'alā
muḥammadin wa-'ālī muḥammadin wa-'ajjil farajahum wa-l'an 'a'dā'ahum

/ʔaʃ.ʔa:.hum.ma sʕal.li ʕa.la: mu.ḥam.ma.din wa.ʔa:.li mu.ḥam.ma.din wa.ʕadʒ.dʒil
fa.ra.dʒa.hum wal.ʕan ʔaʕ.da:.ʔa.hum/ O God, bless Muhammad and the Progeny of
Muhammad, and hasten their alleviation and curse their enemies. (Usually recited by
Shia Muslims)

اَللّٰهُمَّ عَجِّلْ لَوْلِيِّكَ لَفَرَجٍ وَلِعَافِيَةٍ وَلِتَنْصُرَ
'allāhumma 'ajjil li-walīyika l-faraja wa-l-'āfiyata
wa-n-naṣra

/ʔaʃ.ʔa:.hum.ma ʕadʒ.dʒil li.wa.li:.ji.kal.fa.ra.dʒa wal.ʕa:.fi.ja.ta wan.nasʕ.ra/ O
God, hasten the alleviation of your vicegerent (i.e. Imam Mahdi), and grant him vitality
and victory. (Usually recited by Shia Muslims)

Phrases and expressions

There are numerous conventional phrases and expressions invoking God.

Name Phrase	Citation
(Quran or Sunnah)	

Takbir

تَكْبِير

allāhu 'akbaru 9:72, 29:45, 40:10

لِلَّهِ أَكْبَرُ

God is greater [than all things]

Tasbih

تَسْبِيح

subḥāna llāhi 23:91, 28:68, 37:159, 52:43, 59:23

سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ

Glory to God

Tahmid

تَحْمِيد

al-ḥamdu li-llāhi 1:2, 6:1, 6:45, 7:43, 10:10, 14:39, 16:75, 17:111, 18:1, 23:28,
27:15, 27:59, 27:93, 29:63, 31:25, 34:1, 35:1, 35:34, 37:182, 39:29, 39:74, 39:75, 40:65
اَلْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ

Praise be to God

Tahlil

تَهْلِيل

lā 'ilāha 'illā llāhu 37:38, 47:19

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

There is no deity but God

Shahadatayn

شَهَادَتَيْن

muḥammadun rasūlu llāhi 48:29

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

Muhammad is the messenger of God

Tasmiyah

تَسْمِيَّة

bi-smi llāhi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīmi 1:1

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ [16]

In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful

Inshallah

إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

'in shā'a llāhu 2:70, 12:99, 18:69, 28:27, 48:27

إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ

If God wills

Mashallah

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

mā shā'a llāhu 6:128, 7:188, 10:49, 18:39, 87:7

مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ

What God wills

Alayhi as-Salam

عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام

salāmu -llāhi 'alayhī

سَلَامٌ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْهِ [17]

Blessing of God be upon him

Salawat

صَلَوَات

ṣallā llāhu 'alayhi wa-'ālihī wa-sallama

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ [17]

God bless him and give him salvation

Rahimahullah

رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ

raḥimahu llāhu/ raḥimaka llāhu

رَحِمَهُمُ اللَّهُ / رَحِمَكَ اللَّهُ

God have mercy upon him / God have mercy upon you

Istighfar

سْتَغْفَرُ

'astaḡfiru llāhi 12:98, 19:47

أَسْتَغْفِرُكَ اللَّهُ

I seek forgiveness from God

Hawqalah

حَوْقَلَه

'lā ḥawla wa-lā quwwata 'illā bi-llāhi Riyadh as-Salihin 16:36

لَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ

There is no might nor power except in God

Istirja

سُتَرْجَا

'innā li-llāhi wa-'innā 'ilayhi rāji'ūna 2:156, 2:46, 2:156

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Indeed, (we belong) to God and indeed to Him we shall return

Jazakallah

جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ

jazākā llāhu ḥayran Riyadh as-Salihin 17:32, Tirmidhi 27:141, Bukhari 7:3

جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا

May God reward you well

Karram-Allah-u Wajhahu

كَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَجْهَهُ

كَرَّمَ اللَّهُ وَجْهَهُ

May God exalt his face

Ta'awwudh

تَعَوُّذٌ

'a'ūdu bi-llāhi minā š-šayṭāni r-rajīmi Riyadh as-Salihin 1:46

أَعُوذُ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

I seek refuge with God from the pelted Satan

Fi sabilillah

fī sabīli llāhi 2:154, 2:190, 2:195, 2:218, 2:244, 2:246, etc.

فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

in the cause (way) of God

Yarhamuka-llah

yarḥamuka llāhu Bukhari 78:248, Riyadh as-Salihin 6:35

يَرْحَمُكَ اللَّهُ

May God have mercy on you

Honorifics often said or written alongside Allah[18]

Subhanahu wa-Ta'ala

subḥānahu wa-ta'ālā[19] 6:100, 10:18, 16:1, 17:43, 30:40, 39:67

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى

Praised and exalted[20][21]

Tabaraka wa-Ta'ala

tabāraka wa-ta'ālā

تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى

Blessed and exalted

Jalla Jalalah

jalla jalālahu

جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ [22]

May His glory be glorified

Azza wa Jall

‘azza wa-jalla

عَزَّ وَجَلَّ

Prestigious and Majestic

Recitation of Quran

Reciting the Quran sincerely is also considered a kind of Dhikr. For example:

Reciting Surah al-Ikhlās (112) is equal to one-third of the Quran.[23]

Reciting Surah al-Ikhlās (112) 10 times gives a palace in Heaven, and 20 times grants two palaces.[24]

Reciting Surah al-Kafirun (109) is equal to one-fourth of the Quran.[25]

Reciting Surah an-Nasr (110) is equal to one-fourth of the Quran.[26][27]

Reciting Surah az-Zalzalah (99) is equal to half of the Quran.[27][26]

Quranic ayat and hadiths

See also: Dua

Quranic ayat

"It is truly I. I am Allah! There is no god [worthy of worship] except Me. So worship Me [alone], and establish prayer for My remembrance" — Surah Taha, Ayah 14[28]

"O believers! Always remember Allah often" — Surah Al- Ahzab, Ayah 41[29]

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the day and night there are signs for people of reason. [They are] those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth [and pray], 'Our Lord! You have not created [all of] this without purpose. Glory be to You! Protect us from the torment of the Fire'" — Surah Al 'Imran, Ayat 190-191[30]

Hadiths

Narrated by Abu Al-Darda that the Messenger of Allah said:

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"Shall I tell you about the best of deeds, the most pure in the Sight of your Lord, about the one that is of the highest order and is far better for you than spending gold and silver, even better for you than meeting your enemies in the battlefield where you strike at their necks and they at yours?" The companions replied, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah!" He replied, 'Remembrance of Allah.'

—Jami Al-Tirmidhi 3337[31]

Narrated by Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said:

"People will not sit in an assembly in which they remember Allah without the angels surrounding them, mercy covering them, and Allah mentioning them among those who are with Him."

—Bulugh Al-Maram: Book 16, Hadith 1540[32]

Narrated by Abu Hurairah that the Messenger of Allah said:

"Lo! Indeed the world is cursed. What is in it is cursed, except for remembrance of Allah, what is conducive to that, the knowledgeable person and the learning person."

—Jami Al-Tirmidhi 2322[33]

Narrated by Abdullah bin Busr that the Messenger of Allah said:

"Always keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allah, the Mighty and Sublime."

—Sunan Ibn Majah 3793[34]

Narrated by Mu'adh ibn Jabal that the Messenger of Allah said:

"The People of Paradise will not regret except one thing alone: the house that passed them by and in which they made no remembrance of Allah."

—Shu'ab al-Iman: Book 1, Hadith 392[35]

Tasbih of Fatimah

The Islamic prophet Muhammad is reported to have taught his daughter Fatimah bint Rasul Allah a special manner of Dhikr which is known as the "Tasbih of Fatimah".[36] This consists of:

33 repetitions of subḥāna -Ilahi (سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ), meaning "Glorified is God". This saying is

known as Tasbih (تَسْبِيح).

33 repetitions of al-ḥamdu lillāhi (اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ), meaning "All Praise belongs to God". This saying is known as Tahmid (تَحْمِيد).

34 repetitions of 'allāhu 'akbaru (لِلّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ), meaning "God is Greater [than everything]". This saying is known as Takbir (تَكْبِير).

The Shia way of doing the Tasbih of Fatimah[36] is:

34 repetitions of 'allāhu 'akbaru (لِلّٰهِ اَكْبَرُ), meaning "God is Greater [than everything]". This saying is known as Takbir (تَكْبِير).

33 repetitions of al-ḥamdu lillāhi (اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ), meaning "All Praise belongs to God". This saying is known as Tahmid (تَحْمِيد).

33 repetitions of subḥāna -llāhi (سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ), meaning "Glorified is God". This saying is known as Tasbih (تَسْبِيح).

Saying one time at the end: La ilaha il Allah (There is no god but Allah).

Prayer beads

An example of a Tasbih that Muslims use to track their count for dhikr.

Like many other religions, the use of rosaries is also recommended when remembering God. Since it can get difficult to keep track of the counting of the prayers, the beads are used to keep track so that the person reciting the prayer can turn all of their focus on what is actually being said - as it can become difficult to concentrate simultaneously on the number and phrasing when one is doing so a substantial number of times.[37] Similarly, as dhikr involves the repetition of particular phrases a specific number of times, prayer beads are used to keep track of the count.

Known also as Tasbih, these are usually Misbaha (prayer beads) upon a string, 33, 99, or 100 in number, which correspond to the names of God in Islam and other recitations. The beads are used to keep track of the number of recitations that make up the dhikr.[4] [38]

In the United States, Muslim inmates are allowed to utilize prayer beads for therapeutic effects.[39] In *Alameen v. Coughlin*, 892 F. Supp. 440 (E.D.N.Y 1995), Imam Hamzah S. Alameen, a/k/a Gilbert Henry, and Robert Golden brought suit against Thomas A. Coughlin III, etc., et alia (Head of the Department of Corrections) in the State of New York pursuant to 42 USC Section 1983.[40] The plaintiffs argued that prisoners have a First Amendment Constitutional right to pursue Islamic healing therapy called KASM (قاسمة | qaasama | taking an oath) which uses prayer beads. The rosary of oaths, which Alameen developed, was used to successfully rehabilitate inmates suffering from co-occurring mental health challenges and substance abuse issues during the 1990s. All people, including Muslims and Catholics, were allowed to use prayer beads inside prisons, lest their freedom of religion be violated when the prison administration forbade their possession as contraband in the penal system.

Dhakhir

A group of Iranian Maddahs/Dhakirs, in a gathering

A "dhakir" (دَاكِر) or "Zaker" (literally "mentioner" a speaker who refers to something briefly/incidentally),[41][42] or reminder,[43] is considered a maddah who reminds the remembering of Allah (and His Dhikr) for people, and he himself should also be reciter of dhikr; namely, not only he ought to be a recital of Dhikr, but also he should put the audience in the situation of dhikr reminding (of Allah and likewise Ahl al-Bayt).[44] Idiomatically, the term means "praiser of God" or "professional narrator of the tragedies of Karbala (and Ahl al-Bayt)". To some extent, it can mean Maddah/panegyrist too.[45][46]

The root of the word "Dhakir" (دَاكِر) is "Dhikr" (ذِكْر) which means remembering/praising; and the word "Dhakiri" (دَاكِرِي) is the act which is done by Dhakir, i.e. mentioning the Dhikr (of Allah, the Ahl al-Bayt, etc.) by observing its specific principles/manners.[47][48][49]

Sufi practice

Followers of Sufism have two main ways of engaging in dhikr: silent and vocal dhikr. Silent dhikr has been considered by many Sufi practitioners to be the best form of dhikr, where dhikr is done silently and in one position without moving the body.[50] This method of dhikr allowed it to be done whenever one could, and it avoided showing off as it was privately done. Among the biggest advocates for silent dhikr was Baha' al-Dīn Naqshband, and his form of dhikr "...required the practitioners to force internal energy into different parts within the body through concentrating the mind and regulating the breath. This was to be undertaken while repeating the verbal formula that constitutes the Islamic profession of faith: 'there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God'".[50] Each word in the verbal statement was for a specific part of the body, such as the navel or the upper chest.

The other form of Sufi dhikr is vocal dhikr performed using the tongue and body, where showing off is not considered a primary concern. This dhikr could be done privately or within a group, and like the Naqshband dhikr, it emphasized having the verbal invocations ripple throughout the body.[50] Similar to the Naqshband practice of dhikr, where specific words were for specific locations of the body, exists the 'four-beat' (chahar iarb) dhikr that is attributed the Kubravī master 'Alī Hamadānī.

Sufis often engage in ritualized dhikr ceremonies that have stemmed from these two types of dhikr, the details of which vary between Sufi orders or tariqah.[51] An example of this is the initiation of an applicant, where the repetition of dhikr is a necessary component in the ceremony.[51] Each order, or lineage within an order, has one or more forms for group dhikr, the liturgy of which may include recitation, singing, music, dance, costumes, incense, muraqaba (meditation), ecstasy, and trance.[52] Common terms for the forms of litany employed include "hizb" (pl. "ahzab"), "wird" (pl. "awrad") and durood.

An example of a popular work of litany is *Dala'il al-Khayrat*. Another type of group dhikr ceremony that is most commonly performed in Arab countries is called the *haḍra* (lit. presence).[53] A *haḍra* can draw upon secular Arab genres and typically last for hours. [54] Finally, *sama`* (lit. audition) is a type of group ceremony that consists mostly of recited spiritual poetry and Quranic recitation.[55]

Revelations and prophetic messages

According to William Chittick, "The Koran commonly refers to the knowledge brought by the prophets as "remembrance" (*dhikr*) and "reminder" (*dhikra*, *tadhkir*), terms that derive from the root *dh-k-r*".[9] These terms appear more than forty times in the Quran to describe the Quran itself.[9] For example, the Quran refers to itself as "The Wise Reminder" (*al-dhikr al-ḥakīm*) in 3:58,[56] "a Reminder for the believers" (*dhikra Lil mu'minin*) in 7:2,[57] and "The reminder for the worlds" (*dhikra Lil 'alamin*) in 6:90.[58] The prophet Muhammad himself is described in 88:21 as a "reminder" ("So remind! thou art but a reminder").[59] The same terms are also used to refer to other prophetic messages such as the Torah and the Gospel.[9] In that vein, the Jews and the Christians are thus referred to as "the people of the Reminder" (*ahl al dhikr*) (16:43, 21:7).[60] The Quran justifies the sending of numerous prophets by God by stating that human beings, similar to their forefather Adam, have a propensity to forget and become heedless. The key to confronting this shortcoming is the remembrance that God conveys through his prophets.[9] According to Islamic beliefs, prophets have the function of reminding (*dhikr*) people of what they already know, while humans only need to remember (*dhikr*) their innate knowledge of God. This knowledge is said to be present in the divine spirit that God breathed into Adam, as the Quran states that God molded Adam's clay with His own hands and blew into him His own spirit (32:9, 15:29, 38:72). [61][62]

[The message of Islam] is a call for recollection, for the remembrance of a knowledge kneaded into the very substance of our being even before our coming into this world. In a famous verse that defines the relationship between human beings and God, the Quran, in referring to the pre-cosmic existence of man, states, "Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we bear witness'" (7:172). The "they" refers to all the children of Adam, male and female, and the "yes" confirms the affirmation of God's Oneness by us in our pre-eternal ontological reality. Men and women still bear the echo of this "yes" deep down within their souls, and the call of Islam is precisely to this primordial nature, which uttered the "yes" even before the creation of the heavens and the earth. The call of Islam, therefore, concerns, above all, the remembrance of a knowledge deeply embedded in our being, the confirmation of a knowledge that saves, hence the soteriological function of knowledge in Islam.[63]

—William Chittick, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, 2007

The Quran also highlights that God called upon all souls to witness His lordship, so that no one can plead ignorance on the Day of Judgment: ""Lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "As for us, we were heedless of this," or lest you say, "Our fathers associated others with God before us, and we were their offspring after them. What, wilt

Thou destroy us for what the vain-doers did?" (7:172-73).[64]

The Quran uses the term "dhikr" to refer to both the reminder that comes from God through the prophets and the response of humans to that reminder. This word reflects a two-way communication process between the Divine and the human. The prophets deliver the message of God, which is intended to serve as a reminder to humans, and humans respond to it by remembering and acknowledging it.[65] In addition, the Quran clarifies that "dhikr" as the human response to God's reminder is not limited to merely acknowledging the truth of tawhid (the oneness of God). Rather, the term "dhikr" also means "to mention." Thus, on the human side, "dhikr" involves not only being aware of God's presence but also expressing that awareness through language, whether spoken or unspoken. Therefore, "dhikr" encompasses both the inner state of being mindful of God and the outer expression of that mindfulness through verbal or nonverbal means. [65]

See also

As-salamu alaykum

Salat

Sabr (Islamic term)

Adhan

Tashahhud

Japa

Notes

Also spelled thikr, zikr, zekr,[1] and zikar.[2][3]

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